

John Hakala

Life story

Fish and Wildlife — April/May 1997

#Tape One#

John: “Well, I was born in Ironwood, Michigan, back in September 12, 1919, and at the time we were still — [living with my grandparents on my mother’s side] — my mother was taking care of my grandmother, who had cancer — was seriously ill with cancer. So these are my early recollections. Maybe I was a year and a half or going on two years old, you know. I was fortunate to be born in the Newport Mining Company hospital, whereas my older sister and some of my other siblings, they say they were born in a sauna — my Grandfather’s sauna. [But I believe they were born at home — wherever that was at the time.] Upon my Grandmother’s passing away, well, ah — well, see, at that time my Dad was working in the mine, and so therefore I had the opportunity of being born in a hospital — this mining company hospital. And I guess while he was there, too, he was a — no, he was taking a side course. He was [teaching himself] to be an electrician. And this was in Newport location of Ironwood, and so during this period of time he was also installing light poles and distributing power and wiring houses — electrically wiring houses. (I’m gettin’ too involved in it!)”

Carol: “Oh, no! This is interesting!”

John: ^{**{insert}} “There were — five — five brothers and three sisters in the family. One sister was the eldest, and I followed next. I remember when — I must have been just at the crawling stage when my Grandfather used to come in the house for his mid-morning break — in other words, he’d have a second breakfast, which was around nine — mid-morning. And ah, I’d be there crawling around. I recall crawling around, and one time he picked me up, and he set me in the opposite chair to him at the table, and he said, “From now on, you’re going to eat breakfast with ME!” So I remember what he had — thinking back, I mean — what he had on that table. He had salt salmon cut in squares; he had Finnish — what we called *Rieska*, it’s a flat bread cut in long slices, and a pitcher of buttermilk, and a bowl of what the Finns — Finnish people call *felia* — *viilia*, actually — is what today is known as yogurt. One thing I remember about those mid-morning breaks with my

Grandfather was that he taught me, also, to DRINK FRESH EGGS! That was the main dish — set on the middle of the table — was a bowl of fresh [chicken] EGGS! He'd break an end off the egg shell, he'd hold it in my mouth, at first, when I was learning, and he told me to SUCK! [chuckle] And there we'd sit and eat until [chuckle] until I couldn't hold any more. And then he'd set me back on the floor, and I'd go off on my way. And this occurred day after day, and pretty soon I was — I must have been gaining strength, because I was able to even crawl ONTO that chair. I didn't have to have him lift me.

Since that time, I've been very — what's the word now? — PARTIAL towards eggs. I recall when I had arrived at Elmendorf on December 7, 1942, there was an indoctrination of the new crews. And we were invited over to the — I forget whether it was just a mess-hall, or an officers' club, or the NCO club. But there, again, as part of the initiation ceremony, the ones who were conducting this phase of it, had lined up glasses, and had a couple of dozen eggs sitting on the table, and they broke these eggs into these glasses, and then they poured in a jot of beer, and they told each of us, as part of your initiation is to drink this. Which we did. And — **I — LOVED** it!! [laugh] I asked for MORE. [laugh laugh chuckle] Ah, yeah, yeah.

What I really recollect is one day — it must have been 1920 or '21, when my Uncle Dex — Edward Sarkella — had returned from the Hawaiian Islands. He had served in the Panama District, and the Hawaiian Islands for years and years, and he came home, and apparently he was very ill with rheumatism — they called it rheumatism those days — they call it arthritis. I recall hearing voices outside the [chuckle] place we were living. My Grandfather had a huge sauna, which was double, you know — one side for men, one side for women. In this mining district, well they all made their "annual trek" to the steam-bath on Saturday night to get their pores open from all this iron ore that they had in 'em, you know? Well anyway, I heard them — some activity going out there, and I snuck outa the house! I don't know if I was such a little kid I don't know how I got out there, but I wandered down, looking to see what was going on, and [laugh] there I saw this huge barrel with my Uncle Dex's head sticking out of it. He was sitting on a stool in this barrel — this big wooden barrel, you know! [chuckle] And then I heard — no! I heard the screech of a wheel barrow. And there comes my Grandfather from around the back side of the barn. [gesturing] The cows

were on this side, and the horses on the other side. So he comes from the back side of the barn with a wheel-barrow load of horse manure! [laugh] And he's chuckling to himself, I guess, and I'm watching, and — see, this all came back to me, now, in these recent months — just when I've been here by myself."

Carol: "Just thinkin' about it, huh?"

John: "Well, I don't know. From time long ago is more in my mind than what's present.

Well, anyway, he wheeled that barrow up to the barrel, and he lifted his fork — I remember him lifting that fork, and sifting this ah — whatever he had in that barrow, I assumed afterwards that it was — had to be manure, you know. I mean, after I got to thinkin' about it here. Then he — that's right, then he took two pails. He went into the sauna, and he came out with this steaming water in these pails. He had unloaded that wheel-barrow first, and then he came with those pails, and he poured that water in there, and I remember, then, when he started laughing! His chuckle! His — it just rings in my ears even today, you know? And then the next thing I knew, my Uncle had turned around, and he saw me there! And he hollered to my Mother, you know, he says, "Non-nie! Get that — whatever you want to call it — brat — outa here!" [chuckle] Next thing I knew my Mother was FLYING outa the door of the house, and grabbed me, and brought me in there, you know, and PULLED down all the blinds, and everything! And here I'd go, sneaking around and tryin' to peek out again! [chuckle] She'd be there with a dish cloth a-WHACKin' me! [laugh] That's my earliest recollection." [laugh]

Carol: "That's amazing! So what were they doing?"

John: "Well, they were gonna soak him in this ah — hot water to cure his arth — to cure his rheumatism. And you know, as I recall afterwards, I mean in later years, when I think back on it, he had no more rheumatism! He was straight as a rod, and he'd — walk just like a soldier! He never never had any problems with ah — so, I don't know. Maybe that was a cure! [laugh] Maybe that's the cure **I** should take! [laugh] But where you gonna find the horses?" [laugh]

Carol: "Oh! That's GREAT! [laugh] And you were so curious!"

John: "Yeah! Yeah! Well, that was the bad part of it. I was too curious all the time! So then my Grandmother passed away, and **of course**,

my Grandfather immediately went to look for the second “Akka,” which is the second wife. Three days he was back with one, you know!”

Carol: “THREE DAYS?”

John: “Well, he went to Washburn, Wisconsin, and he came back with one. [laugh] So there can’t be two head — or what do you call them, in the house — two main women, you know, controlling the house, of course all three have to go. But by that time, I guess, my father had begun building a place in Norrie — another location of Ironwood.”

Carol: “Were these his parents, or her parents?”

John: “Her parents. And we moved then to Norrie — as soon as the new boss wife came, you know. What — oh, yes — that’s right — the reason we actually DID move to Norrie was that my Dad had obtained a job as teamster for the fire department. In those days they had — they pulled their fire wagons and sleds with teams of horses. And I guess he had had experience selling Watkins items, or whatever they call them, you know, driving horses and that, so they figured that he’s eligible for the job. Or else the politicians put him in, you know? As it usually works out.

But then the fire department in Norrie was located just opposite — kitty-corner to the place where he was born and raised — the house he was born and raised in! That was something that came to my mind, you know. Although I have no recollection much — TOO much about the place itself. But I remember the fire department, because that’s the first place I ambled to, you know, being [chuckle] — from my HOME, when I got out the door, well, I went over the hill to the fire department.”

Carol: “Wow! And you were still a little tiny guy!”

John: “Yeah. Well, I must have been going on two and a half years old or something like that, you know. And [chuckle] (Oh, Golly!) ‘Course these horses that they had, as I remember them NOW, they were really wild horses! Holy smokers! They were — and here is a little brat wandering around in there! I’d go up to where the firemen lived, you know, upstairs. They had their pole that they’d come down when the bell rang, or whatever the signal was. I remember going up there. My Dad told me, he said that ah, “Any time that bell rings, you head for right there in that corner, and you STAY there!” You know? So I’d watch what went on, and the bell would ring, and he’d **jump** off, and he had his pants and his boots all ready so he’d — when he came off the top bunk, his feet slipped right into his boots, you

know, and he'd pull 'em up, you know, and he'd throw his rubber jacket on, and down the pole he'd go, and the next thing — by that time the horses were all loose downstairs, and you'd hear 'em rumbling and charging around, and they were trained so they went under their harness. The harnessed drop on 'em, and they'd pull up a couple of straps, and the door would open, and there he'd be with the whip, you know.

So after after — I forget how many months of this, I had gone there one time when they were going to make a demonstration run — for TIME, see. They were timing all the drivers. The three shifts that they had — or two shifts, I forget what — what it was. But — and this was with the WHEELS — the wagons with the WHEELS — this was in the summer time. And they had this route down Pine Street, swing over on (what was it?) Ash, or something, but then up Oak Street and back down to the fire house. But it was quite a distance. And there was a cliff on two of these places that had just been blasted through all this broken rock. There was no roadway where that went. The road had turned off towards Ironwood, and this went straight down the hill. But this demonstration — well, when I came in there, well my Dad was there, and he — he stuck me under the front seat of the wagon — lifted me up there, and he said, “Just stay there!” [laugh] And I recall, then, that when that bell rang, and those HORSES came, and I was watchin' this little-bit, you know, and I saw that harness drop, and they strapped the horses in, and the doors opened, and my Dad had the whip ready, and OFF he went! And that wagon just s-S-SLID around that curve, you know, ninety degrees down the road we went, those horses galloping as fast as they could, and then my Dad turned around, and told me, he says, “Ring that BELL!” [laugh!] So I was standing up there, ringing this bell! [laugh laugh]

We got to the — we went through this break in the cliff, you know, where they had blasted all that [rock] out, and there was no roadway, just bouncing over those sharp rocks, down to this other road, and when he swung around THAT curve, that wagon just went, you know — I thought it was gonna roll Over — 'course now when I think back on it, I — thought it was gonna roll over. But it really SWUNG — so that the horses had to PULL it to straighten in out. And down the road we went, and we had to make that OTHER turn. Well, anyway, when we finally got up to the top of Oak Street, well, the horses were ALL in FOAM! They were just galloping ALL OUT! Dad

stopped just for a minute, he said to give ‘em a breather, and he handed me on the ground. He says, “Go HOME.” [laugh]

He went around the corner, then back to the fire house. But he got the best time! [laugh laugh] And he did this a couple of times in the winter, too, you know, in the sleigh. Boy, when that SLEIGH slid around. . .”

Carol: “Oh! That’s what you mean about the WHEELS!”

John: “Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, golly!”

Carol: “Wow! Were they those big, big horses? Or were they regular sized horses?”

John: “Oh, they were ah — well, I can’t recall, but they were — I don’t know how they measure them in height, you know. I mean how many hands high. But they were...”

Carol: “They weren’t the ones with the big feet.”

John: “Oh, no, no, no. Not the big feet. They were — they were more or less streamlined horses — more like a racehorse instead of a draft horse.

Well anyway, my Dad always was greatly interested in the woods, and he’d do a lot of trapping, and — on the side — hunting as a boy and as a young man. And of course that got my interest, too. And ah — how was it now? — we moved from — that’s right. My Dad finally bought a farm in Ironwood township from my Mother’s Father. And it was just a — [chuckle] the Finns always like to go where there’s ROCKS, you know. And this was ALL ROCKS. That’s all I remember about the place is ROCKS! Rock bluffs, rock everything, you know. And — well, we moved there in ‘27, I think it was. And then — how old would that have made me?”

Carol: “You were probably eight.”

John: “Eight? Yeah. Eight, nine. Yeah, that’s right. Mm-hm. Then. . . On the farm there, well, I started trapping muskrat. And I — that’s the way I got most of my clothes. It was all during Depression years, you know. There was no money. Dad had wired practically the whole township in electricity, and nobody could pay him, so there was a big shortage of change, you know? And the muskrat I trapped, I recall gettin’ just ten cents a skin for ‘em. [laugh]”

Carol: “Oh MAN! [But] that was pretty good PAY in the Depression, wasn’t it?”

John: “Well, I suppose it was then, but when you think back on it — ten cents! — for forty skins, what was it? Four dollars? [laugh] I recall that

forty skins one time I had! Well, anyway, that kept on directing me more or less towards the woods, you know. And as I grew older, well, even in high school, I started trapping coyote. But I'd have to travel forty miles to our hunting place where I set out these traps, and the only way to get there was by hitch-hiking, you know. But I got a few coyote, as I recall, in those high school years, but then for the [Ironwood Junior] college, which was located there at the Ironwood High School — a part of it at that time — although they made a separate (see, I can't think of the words again.) — they branched it out into a new area, [and called it Gogebic Community College] — at the present time. But I recall when I was going to the Junior College then, we were earning maybe seven dollars and fifty cents a month. We had jobs — during those Depression years, you know, it was all government service. And, of course, they'd give — the treasurer of the college was always there ready with his hand out to get that seven dollars and fifty cents! And I came up twenty dollars short on my final counting for one year, you know? And so I had this coyote line out there, but this was — ah — (what part of the month was that?) It had to be in the Fall — mm-hm. Because I'd been trappin' that summer — running that coyote line. And I'd gone out there — hitch-hiked out this forty miles, and hiked in to where my traps were, and I came upon one trap that was sprung, and it had a dead coyote in it, but it was so far gone already, that I didn't figure I'd be able to get anything on it, you know? So I put it all in a bag, and I carried it back to the road, and here I was — in my pack-sack — and of course it smelled to high Heaven! So a car happened to stop, and it was one of these older model cars, you know, with the light bulb out here, where you could sling your strap over it, and I had it just hanging on the fender. Well, I asked the fella first, if I could do this. I said, "I've got a coyote here that I want to get the bounty on, if I can." And he happened to be a Forest Service man. And he drove me back, and let me off at my drop-off point, and I talked with him all the way in, and that got an interest in Forestry for me. I asked him a few questions, I guess, about what his job was, and what he was doing, and he said cruising, and all this stuff, you know. Setting up timber sales, and all that, and just — well, all the work that he did. So that must have made an impression on me, because then after I got this bounty collected — 'course I had to wait MONTHS! And this treasurer of the college, he was on me every week, you know. And I brought him this slip of paper to show him that I had this commission with the state

of Michigan for this twenty dollars, [laugh] but he couldn't wait to get it, you know! He was ready to kick me outa school! So finally it arrived, and I dashed over there, and I says, "I hope you're satisfied now! You don't have to worry about kickin' me out this year, anyway."

Well then — that was in — I graduated in '40. 'Course the war was comin' — or anyway expected. Anyway, the conditions were of that kind that — well, I had had a buddy in college — at this community college — who, as part of his course, at the community college, took flying as one of his subjects. And, of course, he soloed and qualified as a pilot. We were pretty close, so he said that he was putting in for the Flying Cadets. "John," he said, "well why don't you try, too." So I put in for the Flying Cadets. And this was in the summer of 1940 — Yeah. Mm-hm. That's right.

And then ah — come September he receives a notice that he's to report to — as a Flying Cadet to a certain base in St. Louis! I forget the name of the little field that he went to. But here I'm left — waiting! I waited that fall, I went — of course I was doing some trapping, too, trying to keep ahead of the game. I had nothing else to fall back on. There was no work. I spent that hunting season — well, that whole fall and that — up through Christmas and into January mainly in the woods. I don't know what I derived out of it. I know I got my own deer, and all that. I lived on deer meat for a while. But then when I came back to the farm, I could see that the situation wasn't changing, and that the war was looking more critical, so I decided, I said, "I'm going..." That's right. No word was coming from these Flying Cadets — from THE Flying Cadets — or HAD arrived, I should say. So I went to the — what do you call them — the enlisted men, or the one who enlists? — see, I can't think of these words!"

Carol: "Yeah, I can't think of them either."

John: "Well, that's the way my mind is. My mind is that way, that words don't come to it now."

Well anyway, I went to see him. I hiked into town — 'course I had no vehicles [then], and went to see him, and explained my situation, that I was waiting for orders to see if I'd qualified for the Flying Cadets, you know? At least a denial. And he says, "WELL," he says, "We can fix THAT up SIMPLY! We can.." he says, "all you do, is we'll enlist you as a private in the Air Corps. You go to your station, and you, ah, you tell them what has transpired, and they'll immediately see what's the results of your physical,

and all that, and if you had passed it, and whatever, you know. And if you're qualified or whatever." Yeah. I took him. . .[laugh] [at his word]"

Carol: "You believed him, huh?"

John: "I believed him! So I signed up, went home, told the folks what I'd done. Next day I had to go back, and get the final papers approved. So my Dad drove me there, and, of course, then he realized that I'd be leaving, and . . . It was **THAT EVENING**, too! That was about — **THAT's** right! It was February fourteenth. Isn't that Valentine's Day? **YES!** February fourteenth I left them — on February 14, 1941. Whew! That's right. 1941.

Well anyway, I got, then, finally, to Scott Field, and I found myself in — a buck private in the rear rank in a [laugh] picking cigarette butts!"

Carol: "Not flyin', huh?"

John: "Picking cigarette butts! [laugh] That's all I did for weeks and weeks and weeks, was pick cigarette butts! I'll tell you! I got so tired of cigarette butts, if I see anybody around, coming around smoking even here, you know, I make sure that that cigarette butt is..."

Carol: "Goes home!"

John: "A-huh— goes home with THEM, yeah! [laugh]

Well, anyway, while I was there at Scott Field, well this friend of mine from college — or community college days — he heard that I was there, and he — he made a special trip from

St. Luis to Scott Field, Illinois! St. Louis is in Missouri, isn't it?"

Carol: "Mm-hm. Yeah."

John: "I guess. And boy, I'll tell you, how they snapped to attention when they saw a **Flying Cadet** comin' on base — to visit this lowly **buck private** — in the rear rank!"

Carol: [laugh]"Pickin' up those cigarette butts!"

John: "Picking cigarette butts and washing out those commodes! [laugh] That was all my work, you know? GOL-LY! [laugh] Well, anyway, we passed a few hours there together, and then he departed. But then he — he was — that's right. He was transferring, then, to another flight school, and that was I think in — NO, no! He went to ah — Randolph Field. That's right. He went — was transferred to Randolph Field. That's in Texas, you know."

Carol: "I was gonna ask where it is. Do you remember the town?"

John: "Around San Antonio. 'Cause, ah, later — well, how was it? — Yeah! — Well, that's right! Then they had us take "intelligence tests." I

recall that. We had to scribble out these tests, you know. And apparently I rated pretty high on some of 'em, 'cause they said, "We're sending you to Fort Logan, Colorado, to become a typist and sec'etary!" [laugh] So next thing I knew I was heading on a train for Fort Logan, Colorado, which is close, right next to Denver, you know? [laugh] And there, for — I don't know how many months, three months, or four months, I was ah — learning to pound that typewriter! [laugh] Geez! It was SOMETHIN', I'll tell you! And then, after I finished the course, well, they didn't know where to ship me to, so they gave me a job, then, shoveling coal! I had to fill all the officers' winter coal-storage bins, you know! [laugh] So all I did there for *weeks* and *weeks* was shovel coal — and just as BLACK as the Ace of Spades, you know? 'Cause it was all that soft, bituminous coal, and just as dusty, and — o00, MAN!

But finally orders came through, and it was — where the — it was in Georgia somewhere — Macon, Georgia! By Golly, I remembered the name! And I was sent to Macon, Georgia, and I didn't know it, but this was a training school where they were teaching British cadets to fly."

Carol: "Weird!"

John: "Yeah. See? It all comes out in the wash! [laugh] They were doing this all this time, even though nobody else **knew** about it! [laugh] See? We had nothin' to do with the war! And here we're training British flyers!" [laugh]

Carol: "That're out there doin' their thing!"

John: "[laugh] Yeah! But then they put me in the headquarters section of personnel. They figured since I just came out of school, I have all the brains to do all this stuff, you know. So then they set me down, and all they had me doing was typing ah — what were they? — typing, typing, typing PAY reports! SHEETS and SHEETS of pay, you know! NAMES, and every — every digit had to be checked and rechecked everything."

Carol: "Oh! Tedious!"

John: "Tedious! Most tedious job! And that's the first time I ever used a dial telephone! Was when I was in there! And I didn't even know how to operate it! [laugh] I was used to this crank type! [laugh] Yes! I'll tell you! I...I — It was a problem at first to get used to it! I didn't know how to operate it. But I was supposed to know all this stuff! Here I got all the payrolls made up for that month, and everything checked out ok, and — but as time went on, I — how was it?

When I first arrived at Scott Field, well, I had all my applications and everything that I had sent in to the Air Corps for Flying Cadets, so the first thing I did was to go down to — whatever my main office at that time was, at Scott Field, and turn them over to the First Sergeant. He took a look at ‘em, and he brought ‘em into the Lieutenant or Captain, whoever was in charge of this base squadron that I was pickin’ butts on, you know — cigarette butts, and ah, the Captain came out, and he handed me the papers, and he told me to go to headquarters. He says, “See the Sergeant Major at headquarters. He’ll — he’ll get you straightened up.”

Carol: “All RIGHT!”

John: Well, I was just brand new. That was the first morning. I was just in brown fatigues, and I had no indoctrination in the military. All these officers were coming by, and they’d TURN, and they’d LOOK at me, and they’d LOOK back at me. I was wondering, “What’s the matter?” I was supposed to be **salutin’** ‘em!!! [laugh! laugh!] Here I’m just WALKIN’ ALONG!! [laugh] Minding my own business!! [laugh laugh] I hadn’t had the first basic — you know — ANYthing thrown at me as to what — what I was supposed to DO! [laugh, laugh, chuckle] I was just in these coveralls, you know? [laugh]

I got to this headquarters building, and I guess I didn’t even know what door to go into, but I climbed up the main stairway, and got in through these huge doors, and got in there. They all looked at me, you know. [chuckle] I said, that, ah, Captain so-and-so had sent me up here to see the Sergeant Major — that — for me to turn these papers over to him. That’s what I recall saying, anyway. So they got the Sergeant Major, and he brought me into his office, and ‘course he didn’t have me sit down. He thumbed through those papers, and he says, “Well,” he says that ah, “You’re in the Army, now!” He says, “Until we decide whether — I mean the Air Force — until we decide whether you’re gonna be qualified for the Cadets, you’ll just have to remain here as a, you know, buck private, and do your thing!” So that was the story I had from him!

So I went back and reported into the squadron room, or whatever it was, told ‘em the story, and that’s when they sent me out again — pickin’ butts, you know? Then they — well then they started giving me basic training, too. Marching! Learning to MARCH! [laugh] I don’t know for how long I did that. At the same time, they were giving us these intelligence tests, and that’s when they shipped me to Fort Logan then, and pounding

that typewriter; and shoveling that coal! And then I got on that train finally to Macon, Georgia.

When I got to Macon — of course they didn't know I was coming. I arrived at Macon, I guess, in the middle of the night, and I — I didn't know where to go, or do anything, and I finally saw a telephone with a notice that said arrivals for this Air Base just, ah, call, you know. So I called, and I waited, and I called, and I waited again, and finally at about four o'clock in the morning they — a truck rolls up, and I climb aboard in the back, and they haul me down to this flying field, and they have no place to put me up in, so they put me in a — ah — that's right, there was the — it was the MP's that came to get me — that's right — in that truck. So they had a recreation room. And they had a pool table in there. And they threw a blanket on the pool table, and they told me that — Ah, "You — you sleep here." [laugh] "Welcome to Macon, Georgia!" [laugh, laugh] Oh, boy, I'll tell ya, it was really a time!

And finally I guess I was assigned, then, to this — whatever — squadron — headquarters squadron or something, and then to typing out those pay [roles] or whatever — until the ninth of — NO! It wasn't the ninth. It was a Sunday! December 7 in the afternoon. I had gone into Macon itself — had gotten a pass, and I attended a moving picture show. I can't remember what the show was. But anyway, not even half way into the movie, all of a sudden everything goes black, you know, and they said that — a fella climbs up on the platform, and says, "All — all service personnel are directed to report back to their base as quickly as possible. There's a — take the quickest available transportation that you can get," you know? So I climbed out of the show and went — went to the bus station, got on the bus and went back to my base, and there I found out that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor! And of course EVERYTHING went on alert then, you know! OH! I'll tell you! And, ah, ah, nobody knows nothing, you know — to — what to DO, or anything. But they were all doing SOMETHing, and it was — it was just, ah, — hilarious!

Carol: Just runnin' around, huh?

John: That's all it was! It was just hilarious. Well anyway, that was Sunday. Monday — now how was it? Yeah! — Monday a special courier came down from headquarters, you know, on Macon, Georgia, to my squadron, with orders for John B. Hakala to REPORT to the Flying Cadets!

Carol: ALL **RIGHT**!! [laugh]

John: Kelly Field, Texas! [laugh]

Carol: Y-YES! [laugh]

John: [laugh]

Carol: They WERE listening! Wow!

John: But first, again, I had to pass another physical! See? But they had the — they had sent the Air Corps medical officer to the station — that was, ah (one, two) — I think it was the second day after war had been — well, yeah! The following day war was declared!

Carol: Mm. On Monday.

John: On Monday. Then it was on Tuesday that he appeared, and, ah, I went through this, ah, **interrogation** first, and then a quick medical, you know, and then was handed my orders to report in so many days to Kelly Field.

So I went to Kelly Field — eventually got there, through New Orleans, I guess it was, and, ah, by bus mostly. And when I got to Kelly Field, well, I was assigned to this one squadron, and see, I'd taken ROTC in high school, and of course when they saw ROTC, *{they thought, "officer material!", you know.*

Carol: *THAT's why you weren't saluting those officers, huh?* [laugh]
}[italics were cut from tape by lead]

John: That could be IT, you know? Sheez! [chuckle]

Carol: "Hey! I'm one of ya!" [laugh]

John: [laugh] Yeah, ok. Now I can't think of what was the position they assigned me to? Golly! It wasn't squadron commander. It was the next one under him — ah — I can't remember the title, anyway. But it was the — the second one down. His underling — his immediate underling, but I can't think of the word it was. But anyway, they gave me a **sword** along with it, and a sand brown belt, you know? [laugh] So here — ah — I'm just out of basic training, ba— barely able to march in line, and [chuckle] here they got me [chuckle] in CHARGE of this — ah — squadron of men, you know. And I'm supposed to instruct THEM in all these basics of MARCHing, and all **that**!! [laugh! laugh!] Oh! It was HILARIOUS! But you know, I came out with a pretty good group! I don't know how I did it, but I — they were cooperative, anyway. They didn't, ah [chuckle] take too much advantage of me. 'Course at that time I didn't [chuckle] much care, either. I just let 'em have it with both barrels! Marching them up and down Kelly Field, and got

‘em looking pretty good, and we had a final inspection, and I can recall that — (by **golly!** I **led** the whole squadron! Now how come I was leadin’ the whole squadron? [pause]) I guess my voice was louder — was loudest. That’s why they put me in front [laugh]— so I could count their “one, two, three, four!” [laugh] “HEP!” [laugh] That brass sword! NO! I had the **saber!** I was waving the saber, too, in the air! That’s right! ‘Cause I had to salute the [chuckle] whoever it was — the dignitaries, you know. [laugh]

But anyway, I got out o’ there, and they put me in charge of this ah, truck transportation fleet — to — hauling all these basic — well, the Flying Cadets — to their next base, you know, which was at Ballenger, Texas. (That’s right.) I was in charge of that whole line of trucks, you know, loaded with all these guys. And it took me (what was it?) a day and a half to get there to the base. **I** didn’t know anything about these things, you know? I just sat there in the lead truck with the driver beside me, and [laugh] made on as if I knew it all! [laugh]

We got there in the middle of the night, I guess it was, and all of a sudden we got to the gate, you know, of this flying field, and, the *lights all came on*, you know! As though, “Here’s — they’re invading! Or engaging in an ATTACK or something,” you know? And I crawled outa the cab of the truck, and they grabbed onto me, and they said, — well, I had all these orders, you know? And they *scooted* me in there, and brought me to their, ah, head man, and presented all these orders to him, and eventually we got settled down, I guess. They gave us a bed, and stuff like that, but that was my first day at Ballenger, Texas, for — primarily flying. I was there for three months, and I went — and then I was transferred to Randolph Field! Where my former classmate had gone! And when **he** left Randolph, he had gone to the west coast.

Carol: Oh! He was gone.

John: And when war was declared, he was immediately shipped to the Phillipines! He didn’t even have a chance to check out in a fighter plane when he left stateside, you know? And he was sent to the Phillipines, and he never flew after that!

Carol: He never did fly during the war?

John: No. He was in the Baton March, he fought the Japanese there on the ground, he was — as an infantryman. This is what I learned later. And he survived the Baton March, but then, being an officer, the was

transferred —they wanted to ship him to Japan. And the only way they could get him — at that time, I guess — was to ship him by submarine. And ah — the submarine he was aboard was, ah, — clobbered by and American submarine.

Carol: Oh, no!

John: MM-hm.

Carol: And he was killed?

John: [quietly] Yep. So that was the end of . . . of him. Well anyway, I didn't know about this until later in life, but if I'd learned . . .

But when I was at Kelly Field going — again I was assigned as an officer of one of the squadrons, you know? I forget the — Oh, I was the lead man on one of the squadrons. I forget the title. But I had to perform "Officer of the Day" duty once a month, you know. And that meant that you were up twenty-four hours — around the clock. 'Course you'd sleep when you had a chance, but, ah, but anything going on, well, you had to be on top of it. But while I was in this capacity I was going through this book of former officers of the day, you know, their schedules, and that, and I ran across his name! And there he had it all laid out what he had been doing, you know? So — so that was, ah . . . I thought, anyway, that his folks would like to know that, that I had seen this, but [quietly] when I got back to Ironwood, well, they didn't appreciate it too much. I mean ..., ah,. . . because I came back alive, and he was dead, you know.

Carol: Oh! Isn't that too bad!

John: Yea. So I didn't see very much of those people any more, even though we had a pretty good . . . pretty good relationship prior.

Well then, ah,[pause]

After completing my flight training at Randolph, in a BTA, or something — AT, or something on that order, then I was transferred to Kelly Field, Texas, as a — supposedly a fighter pilot — for training as a fighter pilot. And of course there we did a lot of — well, all types of flight training including gunnery, and bombing, and using, ah, AT6 type of aircraft. And we'd actually shoot at targets strung up behind a plane that would be flying — with a long cable, and then this target flying behind, and we'd be diving at that, and shooting it — or hopefully shooting it up with holes, you know. 'Cause every pilot had their own (what would you call it?) — color of ammunition, 'cause when they'd penetrate, you'd know who's bullet had hit. So I think I came

out high man. And I was scheduled to go — to continue in fighter pilot training, you know? Move up! Just then, when (what's his name? Colonel, Colonel, Colonel... He's a Colonel now. He was a Major at that time, ah — with the B-25's, when they clobbered Japan off of that carrier? Back in — what was it? Forty- — yeah, it was forty-two!) **Dolittle!** General who evolved as — who ended up as General Dolittle? He was a Major when he began that, and he got to be a full Colonel when he completed the flight. And then he rose up in ranks. I guess he went through — a year, up and — he came out a Major General, or a Lieutenant General, or something like that.

But anyway, the B-25 was the BIG — the **HOT DOG!** So the whole class was put into B-25's!! [laugh] So I had NO chance to get into my — what I wanted to get into as a fighter pilot, you know? Well, I'd been in SINGLE engine, SINGLE man — I didn't want all the responsibility for the crews, and all that. That's what I was thinkin' of. But here I ended up with — in that capacity, and — and I was then sent from — (where was I at then?) — [Skott] Field, [Texas] — yeah — I was sent to Greenville, South Carolina! That's the state next — north of Georgia! Mm-hm. Greenville, South Carolina for training in the B-25.

When I got there, they had no airplanes there. Finally a lone B-25, one of the earliest made models — it was, ah, — came in, you know. And of course we were all anxious to get aboard, to see what it looked like, and all this and that, and then we were also taught to fly it — or “checked out” on it — that was the word — “checking out.” They didn't teach you to fly them any more. They figured you knew how to fly, so they just “checked you out.” Yeah, they checked me out in — what was it? — three hours, — no, three flights. They checked me out, and they sent me on my way with the airplane, you know? That's. . . That's the way they did it those days.

And you know, when I first soloed at — what was that field that I said first?

Carol: Not Kelly. . .

John: No. [Ballenger Field, Texas!] Well, in four hours I had my, ah — they sent me up solo, so I must have had something coming — or going for me at flying, anyway. They must have thought I was a pilot! [laugh] Well, anyway, I survived the war, so I must have been! That's good.

Well anyway, after I finished — as I was approaching the finish end of our short course at Greenville, South Carolina, a notice was posted on board

— the bulletin board, is the word I was trying to say — that “Volunteers are being” or “Looking for volunteers for special mission.” So I immediately went up there and signed my name!

Carol: [laugh] You’re kind of a — out there kind of a guy, aren’t you!?”

John: [laugh] Immediately went to sign my name. And then a few of the others — my so-called “friends” at that time joined me, and put their names down. So then the next thing we knew we were being loaded aboard a train to go to California! (I can’t remember this field at all! I mean the NAME of it! And what the heck was the TOWN? What was the main town? I can’t even remember that one now. California. California. It won’t come to me.) But anyway, they had just built this little new airport, or flying base there, and they had some B-25’s there, of course, then we were checked out on these B-25’s, ALSO — that’s right — we were sent there for the purpose of learning to drop — ah — now I can’t even think of THAT name! — these long — torpedoes! Torpedoes! That’s right. That was the main purpose of our being assigned there. And then, ah, we had to fly somewhere — a couple a hundred miles south of th- — **Hammer Field!** Hammer Field! Hammer Field, California! That’s the name of the place! Hammer Field, and then, ah, I guess — the lake that we were practicing flying these missions on — (I can’t remember that name either) but it was about two hundred miles south of Hammer F- —Fresno, California! That’s right! Fresno!

So of course to pass the course, you had to — when you dropped your torpedo, well, you — they had — you were aiming at a “ship”, you know, or — supposedly a ship. It was a big powered barge or something with a — and to make sure that you knew what everything was about, that torpedo had to go right underneath that vessel, you know? The bubbles, of course, would show it. But I finally passed that course, and the next thing I knew I had orders in my hand to report to Alaska!

Carol: REALLY!

John: Elmendorf Air Force Base! [laugh]

Carol: Alaska! Did that surprise ya?

John: Oh! YES! We had NO idea! But see, that was after the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor and Unalaska. And they couldn’t retaliate with what bombs they had on these — the Japanese fleet that had been out there, so that’s why they went into this torpedo training. And that was the last I ever SAW of a torpedo! [laugh!!] Was when I left Fresno,

California!! [laugh] I left the torpedoes behind! [laugh] And here they put me through all that work for nothin', you know? Well, maybe it helped me out on my flying, anyway.

But anyway, when I got to Elmendorf, — yeah! — Yeah, they assigned an airplane. It was a brand new airplane, too, by golly! That's right! It had been brought up through the ferry route, you know, from Montana, through Canada, up through — I guess — Fairbanks, and then down. I guess that was the route they flew them in those days. Well I had to take this new airplane, and ah — and first, — swing the compass. And of course that was a rather involved procedure with these big aircraft, you know. Like they have now-a-days where you just — they set 'em on a platform, and the platform turns. Here we had to roll the airplane around to a new position all the time, and get in there and start up the engines, and so you'd have all your various magnetic forces working when you tried adjusting your compass, you know. You had to go around and around a couple of times like that, and — well, I finally got it to MY satisfaction, which I — which was what I figured was right on the DOT, you know?

So then the next thing, well, let's see! When was it? It was — I arrived, by golly, in Anchorage — that's right — December 7, 1941 —

Carol: Oh! Forty. . .

John: No! '42!

Carol: '43, probably.

John: No, '42! '42!

Carol: OH! Okay. '42! One year after. . .

John: One year after. That's right. One year after Pearl Harbor! And I took this aircraft, and I flew down to — well, I had a crew assigned to me, too. And we flew down — I forget my first stop down there on the Alaskan Peninsula. That air base isn't there any more. [Port Heiden, Alaska.] No, it must have been — it was, anyway, this side of the present — Cold Bay! Heck! All you have to do is think of the weather report! Cold Bay. And this place that I first landed at was, again, about three, four miles — I mean three, four hours, by air by — from Cold Bay. So the next day I flew into Cold Bay, and then from Cold Bay I went down to this secret base which was supposed to have been there — you know, — when the "Japs" came in? They were there, of course, but that was on Umnak Island. And Umnak Island

now is all Native land. So we never hear anything more about Umnak — or this air base that was there. Yeah.

Boy, I remember that *WIND* !! O-o-oh! When I landed there!! And all that night we had to go out and struggle with those planes! They must have been — I don't know! What air speed — They could have been **70! 80! 90** miles an hour, you know? 'Cause the airplanes themselves were [flying] — we had 'em tied down, we went off there, rolled gasoline drums and tied more ropes to 'em, tryin' to keep 'em down! And of course, just to GET there you couldn't **see** your way! You had to — the lead man took a line — a coil of line, and unrolled it, you know, as he went, and the rest hung onto the line, coming behind. And you couldn't see a thing! That was my first REAL experience with Alaskan weather! So . . . That Cold Bay, I'll tell you! That was a rough spot for wind!

Then I finally got to Umnak. There's a special name for the base, but I can't remember that. [Fort Greely] But I arrived at Umnak on Christmas Eve! Christmas Eve of ah, — what year did I say that was? — forty- — forty-TWO. Forty-two. Yeah. Mmm-hmm. And of course we were weathered in there for a few days, and they were in the process of building Adak at that time. That's right. We were held up there to wait until Adak opened. I mean until they got that air strip in. When the weather cleared, off I went, then, for Adak. I was assigned to the seventy-third bomb squadron, which, again, was at Umnak. That base that I was leaving from. Adak was under the seventy-SEVENTH bomber squadron — '25's — but they sent me ahead, being a new man, well, they put me on — oh, some kind of status, you know [detached duty]—so I was flying for both.

Whenever the seventy-seventh was flying, I was flying with them; when the seventy-third came down, I was flying with them, and again with the seventy-seventh, you know? They kept me out there all this while, see? [chuckle, laugh]

Carol: You were doing double duty!

John: [laugh] And, the best part of it was all my gol-darn logs were practically lost because of that. I don't have credit for half the hours that I flew, you know? I was going through some of these magazines — not magazines — write-ups on the Aleutian war, and what — it pertained primarily to what the heavy bombers did, you know. But in between you could get the picture of what the medium bombers were doing, too, but

nothing specific. But there was many a case where the B-17's and the B-24's went out, we were right there with 'em. But nothing was mentioned ever in these reports, you know.

Carol: That's strange. Why? Why did they do that?

John: Well, that's what they — it was somebody keeping records just for the heavy bombardment squadrons, see? But I knew I was on those flights, because. . .

(Ah, what the heck! Where did I go off track here?) To Umnak on Christmas Eve, then Adak, it was a few days later, whatever it was. And then, of course, we were assigned our first bombing mission to Kiska. And it was a — what was it? ! I guess it was three hours, three and a half hours — something like that — to four hours one-way flight. It was a total of about eight hours round trip. And . . .

Carol: What were you bombing? What were the bombing runs... I don't under- — I don't — I haven't read much about that. What kind of things were you going to bomb?

John: OH! Well when — Unalaska was bombed at the same time the Japanese went into Attu. They occupied Attu and Kiska with their army, you know? And, of course, they started immediately building a big air field there on Kiska. And this is what our primary object was — was to destroy any resemblance of an air field that they could develop so that they couldn't get their heavy bombers in, 'cause — this — this whole story would have been different had they gotten them in there, see?

So anyway, we bombed Kiska. We bombed it repeatedly. We bombed it in any kind of weather. We lost more airplanes from weather than we did from, ah, the results of our raids. Although we did lose aircraft. I don't say that we didn't lose any aircraft, but, ah, I know — I remember a few of the aircraft that went down, but I can't remember the people's names... But anyway, as soon as they became aware that the Japanese had these float aircraft on Kiska, well, they immed- — the U.S. [Army] Air Corps — immediately began planning to have a strip on Amchitka — put in a fighter strip there to catch these float planes as they come around, you know — these Japanese floats. 'Cause if they would have gotten on wheels, then it would have been a different story — which we prevented by blasting their, ah, — whatever construction they had in progress, you know, on their air field.

And you know, they [the Sea Bees] did the same thing at Amchitka as they did at Adak. They built a dam across an inlet, you know — a deep inlet, and they pumped all that water out into the ocean. Then they filled, [as the water drained, with volcanic debris from the adjacent mountain at the head of the inlet] — that was the quickest way of makin' an airstrip, see? And then they laid some steel matting down on top of that, and they sent the fighters in there. And the fighters were fortunate. They got there in time; 'cause the "Japs" started flying their big — BIG float bombers, you know? Float ships, or — I don't know what they called them! But anyway, they were in for a big surprise when these P-40's hit 'em, you know?

The NEXT thing I knew, I had orders in my hand to take my airplane down there and land on this little fighter strip! [laugh] On Amchitka! To bomb the Japanese from close range! [laugh]

So — that was the next thing that we did. We went down there, and we flew off of that little fighter strip — full load of bombs, and, ah, I guess we cut our gas back, because we didn't need to have all THAT weight. But then at the same time they were constructing a LARGE strip up above. They had started the process anyway — for the medium bombers, and the heavy bombers to use, you know?

By the time they got that strip open —Yeah. — See, we were living in tents — dug in the side of these hillsides. Then I — well, just before this airstrip opened — before we moved our aircraft up to the upper strip, well, we got word that we were assigned a special [quilted] quonset-type hut [called a Jamesway] that we had to haul down to a hole in the ground where — somewhere out there in the tundra, you know, and, ah, and BUILD it, you know. So that's what we did.

Carol: Gee! This is still winter.

John: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We did it then. [chuckle] We did it. [chuckle] Well, we got fairly comfortable quarters after we finally got it up there.

Carol: Oh, I bet! A little better than tents.

John: It wasn't a quonset hut — these metal quansits. This was a fabric — ah — like a big [canvas] quilt that you draped over the framework, you know? And it had wooden panels on each end, with a doorway stuck in it, and ... But they were FAIRLY warm. You had a — an oil stove, I think it was — NO, no, no, no. No, it was still a coal stove. Yeah, that's right. There

was still a coal stove, and you had to pack in your coal, and — if you wanted to be warm, you know.

Carol: [laugh] Where did the coal come from?

John: Well, they hauled it in with their freighters, to the harbor there. 'Course all this activity was goin' on — the Corps of Engineers was there, building docks, and building all this stuff, and they were doing all this while we were running these missions. See, I don't know what was going on on-site except MY phase of it — which was all combat.

There was a period of time then, that — from July — in July, where the weather was socked in so bad that there was NO flying — until one day — well, we had received reports that the Navy had had a big battle with the Japanese fleet — outside of Kiska. And they — I forget how many battle ships the U.S. Navy had there, but they had 'em strung out in line, and they kept on shootin' these high-powered guns, you know, towards Kiska itself, with — as they explained to me later, that — they said that they were seeing these sightings with radar. And they were shootin' at these radar sightings. And they emptied out all this ammunition, they emptied out all their oil, steaming back and forth, and shootin' away, shootin' away! And finally they had to drop back a hundred or a hundred and fifty miles to the Southeast to refuel and reload with ammunition. And it was then, when the Japanese were out there with their fleet, that they came in to Kiska, and they evacuated ALL their MEN! They — in less than an HOUR they had 'em all aboard, and they were going out! This came to light after the war, of course. Nobody KNEW about this.

But anyway, this weather was all socked in solid, you know? And all of a sudden, we got a report — I — well, actually, I'd been packing my briefcase with all my maps, and all my accouterments, you know — my slip-sticks, and my slides, and all that stuff — for figuring out the time/distance, and drift, and all that. And I happened to have a — I don't know HOW I had it in my pocket, but I had a map of Alaska in my pocket, showing this road that went from — where was it? — this road wasn't — the Richardson Highway wasn't in yet — it was from Valdez to Fairbanks — THAT road. That dirt road, you know? [pause]

Oh! I FORGOT to say: When I first arrived in Alaska, after I checked out that plane?

Carol: Mm-hm.

John: I swung that compass?

Carol: Yeah?

John: Of course I had to check out the airplane, too. And, well, I did! I checked out the airplane. I flew it, and I — that's the first time I saw the Kenai Peninsula, you know? Well, that's right. Just previous to that, that Fall before — it was '41 that the Kenai Moose Range was established by executive order — by President Roosevelt! And I had said at that time, when I saw this, and I was back there at Randolph Field, or Kelly Field, or ONE of those places, where I saw this little item in my home-town newspaper — it was a little piece, you know? I says, "BOY!! Wouldn't THAT be a place to GO to!!" [laugh] Yeah! And the first thing I did when I took off, you know, on the [check-out] flight, I made this whole flight down to the Kenai Peninsula, all the way to the end of Homer Spit, you know? Of course the maps we had didn't have ANY of this stuff on it. There was no Homer there! There was NOTHING, you know? But I remember when I was coming back, I saw all these MOOSE up there between Tustumena and Skilak Lakes, you know. 'Course I didn't even know the names of those two lakes, 'cause all we had was — all we operated with was Navy maps! And they were all WATER maps, you know? Showing — showing the different fathoms! Not heights, you know? [laugh]

But anyway, this one morning in July, — well, see, I'd been packin' this gol-darn case back and forth, and slogging through that MUD, and I think it was about a mile and a half to where my abode was, the one we had built, you know? So I said, well — see, I was going off duty. This was the last day of my shift, to be on alert. I wouldn't have to be sittin' there on that flight line, you know, come daylight — or — seven o'clock in the morning. So I figured, "Why, SHUCKS! With this weather, the way it's been holding, — no aircraft could take off outa here, you know? So I go merrily back up there, leave my bag at home. But I had this-here road map, for some reason, stuck in my pocket! I don't know HOW it was! I got there, and no sooner I got in that tent, than that crank phone rang, you know, and "Pilots get ready! You're going out on an immediate mission" you know.

So — nothing I could do, but just get out to my aircraft, and check it out — see that everything was [in working order], and — well, the lead pilot had a navigator with him, but the weather was socked in so solid, when we took off on the strip, I had to set my compass — not my magnetic — [a Gyro]

compass — so that I'd hold a straight course down the runway. I couldn't SEE anything. Took off, and I flew for pretty near four hours, just skipping the waves, but we were told one course to head on after we got off the strip — off the landing strip, you know. So I set that course up, and I tried flying as close to the water as I could, so I was just seeing dimples out there. And it was blowin'! And this fog was just SO thick! For four hours, I was just flying instruments. And all of a sudden, I POPPED out into the clear — it was just like an inverted bowl, you know? A huge inverted bowl. And up in the corner, WA-AY up there, there was a Navy PBY flying. And that's what we were homing in on. And off to my [left], here, this [line] of ships! And these must have been the same ships that had [left] Kiska, you know. They had made that big circle, and they were coming — and this was toward the Kuril Islands! This is how FAR [west] we were! We had flown all that way out there, you know?

Carol: With nothin' but your instruments!

John: [laugh]

Carol: GEE! Were they American ships, or Japanese ships?

John: NO! These were all **Japanese** ships! Well I, ah, — I didn't know who they were, but I figured that they had to be the enemy, because that's the only reason they sent us out there. 'Course I was the left man on the lead man's — five-plane formation — I mean I was the left wingman. So when he wobbled his wing, well, I peeled off, and I made for the one that I saw. And he came after the next one, and then the next one followed on down. Well anyway, I made this run on 'em, and we had four five-hundred-pound bombs. I came in — this is where those torpedoes maybe would'a come in handy, but — but they superseded the torpedoes with the skip-bombing — with five-hundred-pound bombs. I had four five-hundred-pound bombs on, and came in, and we were spraying that deck, you know, back and forth, with fifty-caliber machine-gun bullets, and of course, they're shootin' back at us, you know, and I remember I had all — I was pressing the [button to the] machine guns with [the thumb of my left hand], and then [when we were in bombing range] I started droppin' the bombs [with my right thmb on the other button at the heifght of 150 feet.] And I hit that ship! I must have hit 'em with three bombs, right in the side, you know? They skipped off the water. But the fourth bomb hit the deck. And the next thing I — as soon as — 'course I had to [pull] up and go over that ship, you know? And I heard my

tail-gunner holler, [over my earphones], he says, “TURN! TURN! TURN! That bomb is coming right after us!!” And I turned, I dumped the [left] wing, and I turned it as hard as I could, you know? And I swung around, and all I saw, was a BIG — ‘course, in that turn, all of a sudden we [BOUNCED] up and down, when that bomb had burst in the air, and of course it riddled my aircraft a little, too, but nobody was injured. But then, as I turned around looking down. . . [pause] That ship was GONE! Just that fast!! It was ALL **GONE!** And I can’t remember how — it was a LARGE ship, because when I popped up over it, well, there must have been a hundred feet over on this end, and a hundred feet over — or MORE, you know — on **that** end. It was that big a ship — I mean, ah, from MY [view]point of seeing it — [comparing it with] the wings of MY aircraft, see? And it just [pause] It was just [pause] so ASTONISHING, I couldn’t believe it! There wasn’t a sign of . . . [the ship] just a so- — swirl — a — big swirl of water! So I must have hit their magazine, and the whole thing must’a blown [and it went down instantly.]

Carol: And it blew up their stuff.

John: Mm-hm. Well anyway, I climbed up to wait for the others, and the others were having problems. Their bombs wouldn’t drop! One fella even crawled in the bomb bay to try to drop the bombs from the bomb bay, and they couldn’t get ‘em loose. They may have — mine was the only ship that dropped the bombs on that whole flight! They had to finally — well, after they made so many passes, they used up so much gas, that there was no way that they were gonna get back to Amchitka, and I knew that myself. So I pull out this map then, while I was up there flying around, waiting for ‘em. I laid it out in front of me, and I — I drew this line from — with that heading that I’d left Amchitka on. And I estimated my time, you know — time and distance. I made a **spot** over there where — and then I, ah, figured out, “Now where would Attu be?” ‘Cause I wanted to get — what **I** wanted to do was find Attu and crash-land on the beach, see?

At the same time, Attu was being, ah, invaded. Yeah. The American troops had gone in — into Attu. That’s right. ‘Course! I had flown a couple a missions there prior to that — that’s right. I was dumping bombs on Attu also from Amchitka, you know. But now this flight I was going — went out to the Kuril Islands in Northern **Japan!!**

So I made this point, and — I don’t know what I used — did I use a string, or what, — but I drew a line. I had the co-pilot scratch a line, and we

estimated time and distance to get to Attu, and when that time was up, I figured, well, I'm gonna either run into that island, or else I've missed it completely, and it was all socked in again! See, as soon as you left this "bowl," you were back in that solid fog! You're flying instruments the whole while! You couldn't see anything ahead of you ... [and the wind was blowing so hard that I was flying at a right angle to the wind with my right wing pointing in the direction I had estimated would bring me to Attu. After my estimated time of arrival had been reached, I was afraid of running into rock cliffs or mountains, so] — I called to my squadron. I said, "I'm going up to see what it's like on the top," I says, "see if I can see any mountain peaks." So they all followed me up. We were all strung out up there. We came out at eleven thousand feet above this, ah, this MESS, you know — this mist, and fog, and [swirling] clouds, and everything. It was all just one big mass! We came out of it, and I immediately went into a 360° turn, and called my radio operator to let out his trailing antenna, and send out a "May-Day" requesting directions to the nearest land, which we figured was Attu Island, as we could not see any mountain peaks or anything above this overcast. This signal, I learned afterwards, had been picked up in southeast Alaska, somewhere — whether by a private individual, or a Federal installation such as the [Army] Signal Corps, or one of the military establishments, I don't know. But it was transferred to Juneau immediately, and from Juneau to Elmendorf Air Force Base, and from there down to Admiral Kinkaid's office in — where he was located in Kodiak — Kodiak being the headquarters for the Navy. They, in turn, had sent the message to their forces, which were lying off of Attu, and apparently the message was gotten by this destroyer, who immediately went out and began broadcasting on that emergency [network], and kept it in line with the emergency field that was then under construction.

We circled for at least fifteen minutes — possibly more. I had turned on my radio compass, and finally the needle began wiggling. I settled it down, and immediately began — well, first I notified the rest of the aircraft that were in the air that I was going to descend on this heading, which was a special [emergency frequency] that the Navy used for directional guidance. So we began to descend through this solid mass of clouds. I couldn't believe it when I got down to zero feet in elevation, that I could not see the waves on the ocean. I still was afraid of running into mountains, but I held this course, since this was the course that had been indicated on the radio

compass. Finally, after the altimeter caught up to my level, that showed me that I was down below — at least a thousand feet below sea level, I began to pick up a few white spots underneath me, which indicated cresting waves. So I started leveling off. And no sooner I leveled off, there in front of me all of a sudden appeared this HUGE GRAY MASS — hidden in this swirling mist and fog and black clouds. I immediately pulled my wheel back, and swung over it. And here was this destroyer! I says, “Well what do I do NOW?” you know? I kept on the same direction that — after I got over that destroyer, I was back on the water. I kept on that same direction. All of a sudden, beneath me was a strip of LAND, you know? It was the north end of, ah, — what’s the name of that harbor? — Massacre Bay! Massacre Bay on the east side of Attu! Well, I didn’t know it, not having ever BEEN there, you know? And my eyes just popped outa my head! I saw MEN down there, you know, with TRACTORS! They were makin’ an air strip! And they had about a thousand feet — I saw outa the corner of my eye as I went over this, there was what I estimated was about a thousand feet of steel matting laid already, you know? So as SOON as I crossed that strip, I put myself in a timed turn, one needle-width wide on my [Gyro Compass], you know, I HELD it there, made a two-hundred and seventy degree turn, and I started dropping down, and I — Oh, that’s right! I — Yeah, yeah, yeah. — Well, I was IN that turn — towards the END of it. And I ordered, “Wheels down.” And the wheels just dropped and HUNG! They just HUNG, and FLOPPED there. So I immediately told them, “Let’s start pumpin’!” So we pumped, and we pumped, and we pumped. ‘Course I had to fly the plane. And we got straightened out — I was just into that two-seventy degree turn, I could see just ahead of me, that I was just lined up with — exactly with what was there ahead of me, you know, on the end of this strip? And just then I heard, “CLICK! [pause] CLICK!” as we were pumping, you know. And then finally — finally the THIRD “CLICK!” for the nose wheel! And as I came in, I pulled up my nose, and the wheels set down — I got as close to the edge of that strip as possible — and my ENGINES quit! So the only thing I could do then was, I jammed my rudder — right rudder — as HARD as I could, so that — I knew these other airplanes were following me — and I scooted off that metal into this — well, it’s all volcanic ash — very soft, you know. But fortunately it didn’t wreck my front wheel. But see, I had forgot to say that

all my hydraulics — all my hydraulics had been shot off. That's why I was doing this, see?

Carol: But you could pump it...?

John: Yeah. I could pump. Because there was — in the big tank where all the hydraulic fluid was kept there was a small tank — just for this purpose — in case you had a bad leak — so that you may have sufficient [fluid] to get your wheels down. But I didn't have enough for **flaps**, see? But anyway I didn't need those flaps, 'cause the engines quit right there, and that's where I would have been sittin' if I hadn't scooted off the runway, 'cause I was out of gasoline!

Carol: WOW!

John: Well, anyway, for thirteen days I sat on that island. WE sat on that island.

Carol: Everybody else made it in, too, huh?

John: Yeah, they all came in. I mean, let's see — NO, no! The flight leader — he had tried to get back — he had the navigator. He thought he could get back to Amchitka. The navigator brought him to the north end of Kiska, and of course they sent out a "May-day" there, too, I guess, when they went down. They ran out of gas on the north end of Kiska, and went down in the ocean. But the best part was: a Navy PBY was right there to save 'em! Think of it! Boy, I'll tell ya, that Navy did some **wondrous** things with their ninety-mile-an-hour aircraft — those huge [PBY] boats, you know?

Carol: So they heard the "May-day," and they just zipped over there?

John: Yep, yep. They got over there, and they got 'em. They may have been in life rafts by that time. I don't know. I don't know what the full extent was, but anyway, they picked 'em up! But then there was — so that left four ships: myself, and then the three others — yeah — mm-hm. So there was four of us on Attu, then, that waited. Until the weather — so-called weather "cleared." And they sent — 'course we got messages then to Amchitka that — what we needed for repairs, you know? And of course they sent up an aircraft with these repairs the first break in the weather they got, but as soon as that aircraft got up to [chuckle] — or LEFT Amchitka, well, the weather [became] socked in at Amchitka! This is the way it is in the summer, you know. And they got into Attu, and we got the repair parts, but then the fellow that flew that airplane in was — some Captain — he says, "You're assigned to take this aircraft back to Amchitka." (You know, the one

that he came with.) “I’m to stay here and get this thing repaired.” ‘Course they wanted time — they wanted time to be in the combat zone. I mean on the GROUND, you know!

Carol: [laugh] Not COMBATING, just...

John: NO! Just — BE there! But anyway, well, we loaded up with gasoline, and we took off! And no sooner we took off, we hit this weather! So instead of flying into it, I decided to fly above it. So I climbed up, and I came out again at maybe twelve thousand feet, twelve thousand five hundred feet, and I was headed for Amchitka first, but it was socked in solid. There were no radio communications with Amchitka at that time, so — although they could hear us when we, you know, called, but they couldn’t send messages back to us. So I just told them that I’m continuing on to Adak. I flew to Adak, and here at Adak they had set up some — I forget ...— “cone of silence” that you could direct yourself in with your radio compass, and — but here, again, it was all socked in to the water. Well, the Cone of silence gave you a position point over the air field where you could figure out your course, then your glide down to the ocean, and what course you’re to follow to come back on that air strip, see? Well, I tried it twice. The first time I went down to a thousand feet below sea level on my altimeter. The second time I went down to fifteen HUNDRED feet! And I still couldn’t see water. In that short distance — there was a big change in the barometric pressure. ‘Course if I had been out of gas, I’d have kept on going down. You know, if I had been to that critical point. But I was afraid — I knew darn well there were these mountains right ahead of me — that I would be flying into them at any time. So I refused. I went back up, and I started east again. I was heading then for Unalaska. — Yeah. Yeah, I figured that I’d try to get to Unalaska, {though I didn’t have enough gas for the trip.] I’d gotten up above that whole mess again — I think it was — it was the same height, I guess, around twelve thousand feet, twelve thousand five hundred, somewhere around there. I was proceeding east, all of a sudden to the southeast of me, I saw this black — ah — ah — what appeared to be a black — I don’t know what it — what it signified to me, but it was BLACK. I moved over to look at it. And BY GOLLY! There was a HOLE — ALL the way down to the WATER!! And you should’a seen me when I — I took off, I — I just — like a screw, you know? Goin’ DOWN! I’ll tell ya! As fast as I could, and I got outa there, and I leveled off on the water, — and I was on the east end of Atka! It was the

first island of — east of Adak! And as I came around the point, I couldn't believe it! During those fifteen days that I'd been on — ah — well, of course all the while I'd been on Amchitka, too, — but the Sea Bees — again, see, the Sea Bees were building that strip up there on Massacre Bay. They were the Sea Bees that were doing that. Here they had put in another metal mat in this cove. The [Navy] had been using this cove as a refueling site for all their PBV's that were out on station. And then they put that strip in just so they could get supplies in quicker if they needed 'em, you know? And I saw these — couple of ships out there, which were the ones that did the refueling of these PBV's, and I saw a few PBV's floatin' on the water, but then I saw that STRIP! And boy, I'll tell you, there was no happier person in this world! I'll tell you! We went in there, and we set down, — [and then we were socked in by weather] again. We were THERE for three days, and — NOW! That brings to mind! — Mothers' day was [coming] in a couple of days! And this was one of the only places outside of Kiska where they had had a weather station. The Japanese, when they went [into Kiska], captured those weathermen, you know. There were seven or eight of them that were in there on Kiska, and this was the second point where they had set up a weather station with broadcasting facilities. And at the top of this one mountain behind the airstrip, well, they had this radio station. It was — it was a signal corps station. That's right. It was a signal corps station — it was military. It was part of the Army. I'm pretty sure it was part of the Army. But anyway, they had this station there, and we went for a hike one of those days that we were weathered in there, and climbed up to it, and this signal corps man, whoever he was — I can't even remember what his face looked like. But anyway, he told us, he said that, "Would you fellas want to send flowers to your mothers?" THINK of it!! For MOTHERS' DAY?!

Carol: Oh MAN! I bet that'd make your mother...

John: Oh! I gave him — well, he said the charge'd be fifteen dollars. I gave him fifteen dollars, and he took down the address! HA! Isn't that something?! [laugh]

Carol: That's AMAZING!! Did your mother just about DIE?!

John: Oh, I — I didn't hear. I mean, ah, — well, I MAY have, but I can't remember, you know.

Carol: Oh! I bet she just... 'Course she couldn't KNOW how...

John: Yeah. Where it was from! [laugh] Oh, golly!

But anyway, we took off from there, then, and went back to Amchitka when the weather opened up. Then how did it go? Oh yeah! We resumed, supposedly, bombing of Kiska. That's right. Next weather that was clear enough to go to Kiska they had a tremendous — see, at this time Attu had been taken already, and of course they had all these troops. They figured that they might as well finish up the job and clear out Kiska at the same time, since they had the Navy out there. And of course they had all this preprogrammed already, and it was all in action. 'Course **I** didn't know it.

Carol: You were just told where to fly, and...

John: Just told where to fly and what to do, you know? So I was in on this here bombing run, and everybody that came back said that, "Boy, those 'Japs' were shootin' at us," and, why, shucks! There wasn't a thing shot at us, you know? I said, "There was no flak, there was no NOTHING, you know?" And I told 'em, I said, when I got back to be debriefed, I told 'em, I says, "There isn't a single 'Jap' left on that island." I says, "You ..." They wouldn't believe me. I says, "Ok. Load up my airplane with gasoline. I'll take a volunteer crew, I'll fly it right in there. I'll fly at deck level, and I'll **show** you." Which I did. I got back. No sooner I got outa that airplane, my mouth was sealed! They had orders for me and my crew. They put me aboard an airplane to ship us to Elmendorf.

Carol: Why??

John: Well, so that the word wouldn't get out that the "Japs" had evacuated! Here this whole — all this big troop movement was in force that they're gonna go through with it, you know?

Carol: Oh MAN!

John: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Carol: So they all got there to an empty island, huh?

John: Yeah, they got there to an empty island, but the Canadians came from the west, up through this valley, and the Americans came from the east, up through that valley, and here they **slaughtered** each other — in that valley!

Carol: [gasp] You're KIDding!!

John: Why, sure! They each thought the other were the Japanese!
[laugh]

Carol: That is HORRIBLE!! Whoa! And why didn't they want you to say? 'Cause they just... wanted...

time — that's, anyway according to the bus schedule. Sure enough, I made it on time.

So then from there I went back to ...What the heck was it?

Carol: Well now when you were deactivated, did that mean you weren't IN the service any more?

John: NO NO! **NO!** I was in the service. It was just the squadron! No! I was transferred. I was transferred back stateside. But the squadron I was in was deactivated. So then I don't know where my records went from there, or if the seventy-seventh ever turned them over to the seventy-third, or what. But I never — my flight records didn't conform to what I had, you know, in my little book that I scratched every time I flew.

(What the heck happened then?) Oh! I remember I had to go down to [San Antonio], Texas. (What the heck did I have to do in Texas?) Oh! OK! For a PHYSICAL! Yeah! They flew me — no, how did that go? I had to travel to Texas, (that's right), to have this physical. Then they reassigned me — no, they sent me to Tampa Bay, Florida, for reassignment! Then — I mean — all this scattering of stuff, you know? And from Tampa Bay, they sent me right back to Greenville, South Carolina! [LAUGH, LAUGH!]

Carol: [laugh] Goin' around in circles!

John: [laugh, laugh] Aw, gee!! And when I got to Greenville, they said, "Well, that — bozo doesn't want to do any more FLYING," you know, — that's — they **ASSUMED!!**

Carol: Without askin' ya.

John: Yeah. They assigned me to, ah, as a battalion commander of a black troop of — black **troops** — ah — on a bombing range. So I was in charge of this detachment of black troops, you know? Battalion sized — on this bombing range. And that was located — (now where was it?) — was it still in South Carolina, or was that in North Carolina? It was right close to the boarder, anyway, I forget which. It was in a National Forest — in the center of a National Forest where they had this bombing range set up. And — well, I went there, and when I saw the conditions these troops were working under, I thought I'd improve their conditions. I set up a rec-room for 'em, with pool tables, and all this stuff, you know? And I set up a PX — that's the word: PX — I was trying to figure out that word — PX. But they wouldn't — the military wouldn't finance it. So I financed it. I had the construction done by the battalion carpenters, and that, and it was right in

the buildings themselves. [quietly] But the bad part was [pause] (How many months was I there? I can't even remember that.) I was there through Christmas. That's right. It was in January. January they must have had a blast! I mean, somewheres — these Negro troops, I mean the black troops. They came back to the station, and they wrecked the whole place! They tore down the door to the PX, and they scattered — well, not SCATTERED — not only scattered — they removed all the — everything that was in there, and they — the pool tables were dumped over, all the felt, you know, was **ripped**, and **torn**, and all that! So I figured up the damage, you know? I first called them all together, when I first saw this, I had the whole troop lined up. I told 'em what the situation was, that I had set this up for them, thinkin' that I was helpin' 'em out, makin' it easier for their time away from home, to have these things available to them: their cigarettes, and their pop, and whatever they wanted, you know — their candy bars, and all that? Why, shucks! It was well-stocked! And I told 'em, I said that, if those responsible will step forward, that I — I'd accept the financial loss — you know — of all this — that I'd have that pool table repaired outa my own pocket. Nobody would move. Not a single man would move. I says, "I know ALL of you aren't involved in this — or WEREN'T involved in this. It was just a few individuals that came in drunk, you know?" But nobody would step forward and say anything. So I said, "OK." I said, "The next payday you can just figure that it's gonna be ALL deducted from your pay." I says, "I've got a total here. I've got it divided up so that each man of you will pay — each your share — since you don't want to state who did it, or anything about it." Well, then, this caused a BIG RUCKUS back at the base, you know! That Chaplain! You should have seen the Chaplains coming! Every — Here that ogre's taking it out on these black troops, you know? So when the payroll did come, I just — course everybody was there — I mean the Chaplains, the — they had set up some Majors, and all that, to observe this thing, see? And I — I just counted out their money as — I deducted it from 'em as each one on my sheet of paper told me to deduct, and I says, "Fine. It's all settled." So the next thing I know, the Colonel of the base comes up — shortly, you know — to see what the results were. And, ah, 'course they just come up to — they have a special meal all the time that you put on for visiting troops, you know? And as we were sittin' there at the dining table, I turned to the Colonel I said that, ah, "How long would it take me to — How long would it take to have me

transferred back to flying?” He looked at me — — — see, prior to this — to keep your rating up, you had to get in so many hours over a two- or three-month period — of flying. And I couldn’t get that in. But when I’d go into the main base, to — well, like on business, like gettin’ that payroll, and all that stuff, I had to do that on my — personally, on my own. ‘Course they’d — the military truck would drive me there and bring me back. But then a couple of times — or no, just one time. That’s right. It just occurred one time — I knew my three month period was over — that I’d be losing out on my flying status if I didn’t get a flight in. So I went down to my old squadron that I had been in, and I asked, “Is there any chance of getting some flying in? Do you have a long cruise — night cruise, or something, you know — mission that — training mission that I could accompany, as copilot, or whatever?” And they put me on right away! I flew down to Texas, you know? And I came back, and I had my time, you know? I held my flight status! But as soon as I got back to the base, well, this underling, now, of the Colonel’s, you know — the Lieutenant Colonel — the Executive Officer — that’s right! (That’s what I was there at Kelly field. I was the “Executive Officer!” [laugh] So we can go back to that cassette and put in “Executive Officer!” [laugh]) He had me there. He had me on the rug! Oh, boy, did he chew me out! And he was — he wasn’t a flying officer, see? And of course the Colonel, himself, wasn’t a flying officer. He was from World War One days from France, you know. So I had made up my mind, then, after I got this chewin’ out. I put in an official application: “Immediate transfer” you know — to — back to flying status, after I knew I had the status still. Otherwise I’d have had to go through another big training — retraining program. So I put this through, and, you know, the Colonel approved it immediately! Within a — I don’t think it was a WEEK, I was gone from — as soon as they got a replacement for me at this bombin’ range, I was OUTA THERE! I was back to Greenville, South Carolina! [laugh]

Carol: Welcome home! [laugh]

John: But then as I came — when I got in there, I reported to whatever “casual” group I had to report to, they told me, they said, that “You have to get your own crew.” They said, “We don’t have any men available except the ‘discards’ over here in this one, ah, one [laugh] quonset — or building,” you know, for the fellas that hadn’t been assigned, and had been eliminated from other crews, you know, all the old “[rejects]” — SO-called

“has-beens.” Well, I went over there, and I checked with them, talked to them, and I finally picked out a copilot, navigator — ‘course the navigator — there was only one navigator, and I wasn’t gonna take him, anyway, but [he was] the only one there — I had to have a full crew, so I had to take him. I took an engineer, a radio man, and a tail-gunner — yeah. I got all five — I got the whole crew. So I proceeded to indoctrinate ‘em back into flying. And, of course, reindoctrinating myself, too. And, ah, we were doing a lot of bombing on that bombing range, too! [laugh] Which I had left, you know. They knew when Hakala was up there, though! [laugh] All the black troops [laugh] I was gonna tell one of ‘em, I said, “I’m gonna put this down your gizzard.” [laugh] But I didn’t. I had pity on ‘em.

But then, ah, (how was it?) Oh yes! As soon as I — yeah. Yeah. As soon as I completed my check-out flights, and I’d run the course that needed to be done, I’d flown instruments, had come in on instrument landing, and checked out in all my various activities that I had to check out in, well, I immediately applied for transfer overseas. So they looked at me, and they said, “What’s wrong with you?” [laugh] I says, “I want to get outa HERE!” So next thing I knew, we were aboard a train heading back to California.

Carol: Now this is in ‘43.

John: This is in ‘43. NO! ‘43 — This is **‘44!** This was ‘44! And it was during this interval, when I had been at home — see, my wife was the best friend of my younger sister. And their 40 [acres] was just opposite ours, you know, just a fence line was between us, but I had paid **no** attention to her whatsoever all these years, you know, till I got back to Ironwood, and, of course, being, ah, wanting to see, ah, (oh, what do you call the) — “excitement” of the town, decided to go into Ironwood itself, and there was only one little place open for eating, and they served, maybe, some beer and wine. So I had gone into this place — that’s the **ONLY** place open in Ironwood! That’s what kinda town it is, see? And, ah, while I was in there sittin’ down, in walks a former teacher of mine from my younger days, and he comes over with his wife, which I had known sometime in the past, too. But they called me over to their booth, that’s right. They were sittin’ down. When they saw me, they called me over to their booth, that’s right. I suppose we were doin’ a little talkin’, and that, and all of a sudden I turned and looked, and in the door came two ladies — two young ladies. One was

the sister of the wife of this teacher — former teacher of mine, — and the other one was, ah, my later wife, Mae! And I hadn't seen her since —well, she was a snotty-nosed little brat, you know? That's about the size of it, you know? And here she's a young lady, you know?! I says, "HO-ly SMOKers!!" I got up, and I went to there, and I invited her over to the table, too, you know. Of course, she would have come over there with — being the sister of the other one — with the sister of the other one. Anyway, that started our [life] together, but then in between times, she got ill. She got very ill. [quietly] That's another story. . .

But anyway, I, ah, shipped out to Sacramento, California, where I picked up a brand new bomber — checked it out — had to swing those compasses again, you know? But this time it was on a rotating platform, you know? It was NICE! It was a quick job! Oh, golly! [laugh] It wasn't like up here at Elmendorf! Oh! MAN!! It took time and muscle! And, ah, I got the aircraft all checked out, and took it out on a couple of maiden flights, and had long-range tanks installed in it. Everything seemed to be hunky-dory. They gave me my orders, and — (what time was it in the morning?) — I think it was one o'clock — one o'clock in the morning I took off from Sacramento, California, to head for the Phillip- — to head for the Hawaiian Islands. And before I got half-way, of course, we had to transfer gas from the extra tanks that we had installed to our wing tanks, where it could be used, you know? Well, the pump wouldn't work! So I had to turn around! GOLLY!! I'll tell you, was I disappointed!! I had to turn around and go all the way back to Sacramento! Then I had to fly for hours up there, just doing NOTHING, you know, trying to get the weight of my load down, so that I could land safely! So then the next night, we did the same thing again! And we had to come back! The fuel pumps wouldn't work! They worked on the ground. I told 'em — and they worked before — I made SURE they worked before we took off! But when we got over there where we needed to transfer gas — they flicked on, and they went out! So — back we went again!! TWICE now! Now the THIRD time, I said, "Now THIS is IT!" [laugh] And the same — well, — yeah. But then we took off — or I took off — WE took off — the whole crew. No! There — there was just — we had sent a couple of fellas ahead. I don't know if they went by water, or if they had flown by other military transportation. Could have been other military — I don't recall. But there was myself, my copilot, my [so-called Navigator], and my — was it the radio man? — yeah!

NO! The radio man didn't accompany me. My engineer accompanied me. That's right! Mm-hm. So there were three of us. Two were sent by other transportation. That was, again, to lighten the load.

Well, the second take-off was the same thing, but when I came back, my wheels wouldn't fall — wouldn't drop! I put the lever down, — nothing! Anyway, the signal light still showed red — that they weren't locked, you know? So, I — (how was it?) — No, it was the NOSE wheel that wasn't locked! That's right! The nose wheel wouldn't lock. The other wheels indicated locked. So I called in, and I told them, I said that "Well, I'll bump this thing along the runway, and see if I can't make that nose wheel lock." So I came in a couple of times and bumped the bomber down the runway, you know, and the light wouldn't change, so then I finally called them, I said, "Well, you'd better spread some foam out there," and I said, "I'm gonna come in anyway. And if that nose wheel collapses, well, at least we'll have something greasy to slide on, you know? It wouldn't wreck the WHOLE airplane." So — came in and landed, and — NOTHING! It was just the god-dang electrical malfunction! [laugh]

Carol: It was working, but you just didn't know it.

John: Yeah! It just didn't show it was working, you know? [laugh] The red light was on!

TAPE #2 SIDE B

Well, we had to stay that evening until around one o'clock in the morning at Sacramento. I forget what the name of the military base was, but this was my third try now to get to the Hawaiian Islands. Everything checked out. The plane checked out well. We took off, got half-way to the mid-point. Gas was transferred nicely. We passed over the mid-point ship, which we had homed in on, — it was anchored out there in mid-Pacific. Then we turned our course toward Oahu — the Hawaiian Islands. We made our way, and as we were proceeding, we could see the gas gauge just lowering itself, and nothing visible in front of you. The weather had been fine all night, and all of a sudden I saw the largest island. I think it's where the — I forget the name of it, but I could see that coming over the horizon, and I was looking at my gas gauge, and I figured I'd head directly for this largest island. I knew Oahu was off to my right more, but I wanted to be sure I'd be in the range of a beach for an emergency landing, because apparently my aircraft was using a lot more gasoline than normal. [interruption?] Until I made out what I figured

was Diamond Head appearing on Oahu. So I turned the airplane towards Oahu for Diamond Head, and as I approached, I was maybe an hour and a half out still, my gas needles were both on zero, so I dropped my flaps, lifted up the tail, reduced speed, and just worked along until I got around Diamond Head. I sent out an SOS in case we went down in the water. Fortunately, being in that attitude, it was draining all the gas forward, so that it was all going into the fuel lines and into the carburetor, where it was needed. We made it all the way to the mouth of where Pearl Harbor came out, and we had to swing right then, a hundred eighty degree [turn] to make a landing at the Air Corps base there. We landed, and immediately a vehicle was in front of us, and scooted us off to a parking area, and we had to sit in the airplane and buzz-bomb the inside of the airplane for an hour. 'Course all this while I'd shut the engines down. Then the tow truck came, after an hour, and towed us to the regular parking area. And I had the mechanic, who came over to the plane, I asked him specifically to check exactly the amount of gas I had left in those tanks. Which he did. Later on I learned the total was ten gallons in both tanks! So you can see how close — without having my — [laugh] how close we were! And we were supposed to have had long-range carburetors on our aircraft for this flight, so something had gone wrong. But anyway, we made it. We spent the night there, and — well, no. It was — we had arrived — it must have been around noon. That's right. We spent, then, that afternoon and the night there sleeping. I remember sleeping. We got up at — for an early breakfast the following morning, and then we were supposed to take off for Christmas Island, which was due south of Hawaii. So I went out to the plane after we had our breakfast, ran it up, checked it out, everything seemed to be functioning properly, so we got aboard, and we took off, and headed south. We weren't — well, we had reached the point of — where we had to transfer gasoline again, and the same thing occurred. So the red lights came on, no pump working, so we had to turn back to Oahu! When I arrived there, well, they made me — made us fly — stay in the air for close to three and a half hours, so it reduced the weight of the airplane for landing on their airstrip. And when we got — taxied back to the parking area, the only thing that was wrong was the electrical connections!

Carol: Oh, gee! So you could have made it.

John: Yeah. Well, we couldn't make it, no! Because the gas didn't transfer.

Carol: Oh! Oh! The electrical connections wouldn't allow it!

John: Mm-hm. So the following morning we did the same thing. But this time I was determined I was going to get through! So even though a front had been predicted, they had stated that it wouldn't be a very **solid** front. It'd be a very narrow strip that we'd have to cross through in our southerly direction. But as I approached this front, it kept on getting blacker and blacker! And I started climbing. I'd been flying down at nine hundred feet. I climbed to five thousand feet, and looked for an opening through the front, running down the face of it. I saw what I thought was a light ahead of me, so I swung the airplane into it to cross over to the other side. And instead, I must have hit very close to the center of the storm! Because the next thing we knew, we were up at fifteen thousand feet — and this was — the altimeter had not been catching up to us rapidly as we had rose, and the next thing we were plunging down — straight down for the water, and it was raining so solidly that the inside of the plane was just as though we had — nothing between us and the elements! It was just POURING rain inside the plane, and here I was on instruments! Flying those instruments, that — part — well, one time I know for sure we were even laying on our back! It had flipped us over, and I got it back straightened out, and we were — I was VERY happy, though, that the engines didn't sputter! They kept on running, even though I had — I had reduced power when we had started these ups and downs. We had gone up and down at least five times, and all of a sudden we broke out into the clear! And this is when my navigator — the one that I had picked up at one of the excess [Baggage"] — refused to do any more as far as navigating! So I just reached over and switched on my radio compass as I had done there in the Alleutians, and I let the needle swing around while I kept the course that I had previously been flying until that needle started working, and by — before long, it swung over, and I turned the airplane, and within a [couple of hours] or so, I don't remember how long it was, but there was Christmas Island! We landed, and parked, and got off the plane. A Major came up to me, and he saluted me, and he said, "Major **Baun!**" I says, "No, Sir," I says, "It's Lieutenant **Hakala!**" [laugh] I must have looked like Major Baun, you know. [laugh]

We spent one full day at Christmas Island, and then we took off to go westward. We left — I forget what day, our dates, what time it was as far as the leaving part, but we were following the reverse course of Amelia Earhart.

And we flew — actually, I found out later I'd flown over the same islands where she had been reported missing — in that general vicinity. So I was flying her course, only in reverse. My next stop was Tarawa, then Guadalcanal, then another point on New Guinea — I can't remember the name of the strip, but it was across from Tarawa, where the Japanese had their big installation, and of course we were flying without any protection. We had no guns. We were completely, as you call it, in the nude! And the Japanese were swarming around there, but we made it through to our landing point, which was northwest of the island of — the HUGE island of New Guinea. Then from there I proceeded to the Philippines. But my main station, after I got to Manila, the main station that was assigned to me was Palawan. So my crew and I were shipped out to Palawan, which is just southwest of the Philippines itself in the China Sea. And here's where I spent the last days of the war. We flew — we were flying raids when MacArthur landed, and then on the main island of the Philippines — I forget — there are so many islands there! I was on a bombing run on — was it April — NO! August seventh, with my bomb bay doors open, when my radio man called me on the intercom, and he says, "I just received a message that the war is over!" [emotional chuckle]

Carol: OH, MAN!

John: So I immediately ordered the bomb bay doors CLOSED!

Carol: YES!

John: And we headed back for Palawan! [quietly] Yes.

And then, during those days immediately after the cessation of actual combat, we were on patrol duty, because the Russians at that time were acting up as far as the Kuril Islands were concerned, and they were afraid that they might invade the Kuril Islands, which were the north end of Japan, you know? And — but then I guess satisfactory diplomatic relations were arranged, which ceased all this conflict, but we still patrolled the China Sea until — and we were actually patrolling between China and — Taiwan — the island of Taiwan. Because of the Chang Kai Chek had moved his troops over to Taiwan, and I guess they were just wanting to be sure that the Chinese troops who had taken over China — the Communists — wouldn't invade Taiwan at that time.

So I was there on the islands from August till in November, when an offer was made to me to take a squadron to go to Korea, and I thought it

over. And they also offered me a Majority along with the squadron. That was supposed to be an enticement. But I had made a commitment with my friend back home, who was in the hospital, and — undergoing this operation down in East Lansing — that I would — as soon as my war duty was over, I'd return to the United States. So I put in my forms for that purpose, and I came out high man because of my previous service in the Aleutian Islands, and I was one of the first aboard the ship returning to the States.

Carol: All Right!

John: [chuckle] Well, I returned, then, finally, to San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge, rode under it aboard ship, and was discharged from the ship, assigned to a military base for transportation eastward. Then what followed — No! I received orders, then, to — for my final destination, which was in Wisconsin — for my final discharge action. I've forgotten the name of the place where I went to. It was one of the fields, but for some reason I can't remember. Well, anyway, I arrived back in Ironwood two days before my future wife, Mae returned from East Lansing. She was sent directly to the Grand View Hospital, where I met with her, and then they gave her a furlough. This was just before Christmas — for over Christmas week. So I accompanied her. I brought her to her home, and — saw her set up there, and then after Christmas was over with, she went back into the hospital for a few more weeks — I forget weeks or was it a month's stay before they finally discharged her. And apparently they figured that they had [her problem] all corrected, which they did.

Well, by that time, of course, we had made our commitments; we were to be married that following summer, June seventh, [pause] forty-seven. [pause] Which we did. And then, thinking it would be preferable — I was thinking of going back to college, of course, and I was thinking that that Arizona weather would be a lot better for my wife than that clammy climate up in northern Michigan — upper Michigan. So we packed up, and we loaded the forty-one Ford — I had a forty-one Ford — two-door. And we headed out West! I drove all the way to — first to Arizona, I think. I can't remember the places where the universities are located, but I went to the universities at Arizona, New Mexico, and finally to Denver, or in Colorado, and they all turned me down. They said that, "You have a good university back in your area, so that you — you better go back there, and ..." I tried to tell them that

this was for my wife's benefit, I'm wanting to move out West, but they wouldn't take that as a . . .

So we returned back to Michigan, and I applied to Michigan College of Mining and Technology, and they accepted me immediately. It's now known as the Michigan Technological University, though. So after four years there, I got my degree in Forestry, and part of that degree I had made a commitment with my wife, I said that "We, ah — as soon as I get that degree, we're heading for Alaska!" [laugh]

Carol: [laugh] It wasn't COLD enough in Michigan, huh?

John: [laugh] And she KNEW about this all those years! So when we finally got back to Ironwood, and we repacked, and — NO, no, NO! NO, no! That was a **big** operation! I had to buy a new vehicle, that's right! 'Cause that old forty-one Ford was no longer usable! I made the rounds of all the garages, and I came upon this one [laugh] — what was it? A forty-nine three-quarter-ton International truck, painted in **bright yellow!** [laugh]

Carol: Here we come! [laugh]

John: And of course by that time we had had — obtained a house trailer that we had been living in during that last year at Tech, you know. So I hooked that trailer behind that truck after I had modified the truck to hold a fifty-gallon reserve tank of gasoline, in the back, that I could run off of. I'd run till that tank was dry, and then I'd have my eighteen gallon tank, which was behind the seat, to get me to — HOPEFULLY, to the next gas station. And of course I had to put on electrical wiring to work the brakes on the trailer that followed — I mean the house trailer.

So we got all that done, and we took off. And we arrived in — we crossed the border — the boundary — we arrived at the boundary on July 4, 1950! [chuckle]

Carol: All right! Wow!

John: So we proceeded up the highway to Fairbanks!

Oh! I left out a part! Yeah. That's right. Prior to this, I had been making inquiries on going further in school at the University of Alaska. I received word from one of my inquiries that the new Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit [Leader], that was being assigned to the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, would be coming to Tomahawk, Wisconsin, to pick up some beaver traps — live beaver traps — that when he reached Tomahawk, why he was

going to make a side trip to Ironwood to see me. Well, I made arrangements that we'd meet at the St. James Hotel in the lobby, and, of course, we met there that morning, and — I had my wife, Mae, come in with me, and I told her before she went in there, that "This is MY interview," that "You're not to say anything." [laugh] So she came in, and she sat down alongside of me, and we talked with this Dr. Hosley, who was the first Cooperative Wildlife Unit head at the University. He asked me various questions, and how we were going to make our way, you know, and what we were going to do when we got there, and I told him that I would need to work this summer, after I arrived, that we had very little money, that we had just enough money for that trip up, and I had borrowed to purchase that truck — from relatives, and that we were sadly in the HOLE, actually. So he turned to my wife, and he said that, "Do you take dictation?" [laugh] My wife said, "Yes." He says, "MY secretary!" and he hired her on the spot! [laugh]

Carol: [laugh] Isn't that NEAT!

John: Yeah, yeah. So here we arrived in Fairbanks, then, after a — well, it was a more or less uneventful trip. I had a few flat tires, and stuff like that, but we made it in, I think it was eleven or twelve days. But we drove into College, and followed the road up to where the University was supposed to be, and I got up around the turn-off, just above Dr. Bunnell's cottage, where his home — where he lived at the time, and I stopped my vehicle [chuckle] in the middle of nowhere! And I looked around, and I said, "Well WHERE's the University?!" then I see two people come walkin' towards me from way in the distance, and they come up to me, and it's Dr. Hosley and his son, Ralph. And I asked him, I says, "Where's the University?" He says, "It's right **HERE**!" [laugh, laugh] All there was then was a big building, and that was half way over the brow of this hill that we're on, you know? And you could barely see the building there! And then there was the water tower, and then they had — they had begun building one section where they had a post office on one end of it. They had the post office part done, and they were building on the rest of it. But then they had various other former military buildings that they had hauled in and set up for student housing — that's right, for student housing. So then I asked, I said, "Well, where am I going to be able to put up, you know? Set my trailer up?" 'Cause we figured we'd use our trailer for our winter home. And we found out we could not park

anywheres on University land! We had to get off it completely!! Those were the regulations those days! [laugh]

Carol: [laugh] Nothin' THERE, but you can't USE it!

John: [laugh, laugh] Oh, golly, I'll tell ya! And then Dr. Hosley says, "Well I been checkin' with the Fish and Wildlife service, and there IS a job being offered that — if you're interested in, to go to Kodiak Island, Alaska, and study the bear for the summer."

I says, "Yes," I says, "That'd be **VERY** VERY interesting, but would my wife be able to accompany me?"

So he said he'll find out. And he went and — well, maybe it was the following day that he came, and he say, "No. They will not accept others, you know?"

So I says, "Well, I'll have to turn down the job."

So then the next thing I heard, they opened up a SPECIAL job right here on the Kenai [National] Moose Range, setting up research plots in this '47 burn. They had set it up specifically, I guess, because, ah, — **why** I don't know, but they must have received word from down in Juneau, the Regional Office, that I had a former friend there who had been my Intelligence Officer in the seventy-third bomb squadron, and he was a high "mucky-muck" down there, and he said, "You find a job for JOHN!" [laugh] See, that's how you get ahead in this game: by knowing SOMEONE! [laugh]

Carol: Oh, WOW! So he was in Juneau still.

John: He was in Juneau. Oh, yes. He had gone back to Juneau and took up his former job, and — 'course he wasn't the HIGH mucky-muck, but he was one of the lower totems, you know? But he had enough influence, anyway, that, ah, — AND, to top it off, he flew all the way to Anchorage, then, when we drove down, with the truck. I left the trailer there [in Fairbanks], parked on some private property, to get it off of the — [chuckle] get it off of University land, and it took us a day and a half to get down. And I remember — we were coming down what LATER I found out was Sheep Hill — Sheep Mountain? — and as we were coming down, it was ALL FOG! And all of a sudden, this HUGE Bull Moose walks — comes across the road! And, of course. I had to slam on the brakes! He — he just floats through that mist, you know, this HUGE ANIMAL, you know?! I told Mae, I said, "We're gonna have to stop here and, you know, wait until this fog clears up." So I went a little further, and I parked, — I saw where there was a place where I could

back up into — NO! I DROVE into it, because the tail-end of the truck was out to the road. And I fixed up our bed back there with a big tarp over it, you know, and all this mist, and — well, it was even raining slightly. And we woke up that morning — I stuck my head out from under the tarp, you know, and I looked ——— *and HERE's Matanuska Glacier right there BESIDE us!!!* [laugh] See how things happen?! [laugh] There it was!! Matanuska Glacier! RIGHT THERE BESIDE us!! We couldn't believe it!! [laugh]

So, anyway, we continued on, towards Anchorage, and about — well, let's see, was it — it was before you get to Palmer — no, before you get to Wasilla there's a stretch of road — and along this road was a long trailer, both tires flat, and we recognized the rig, because we had driven part way up the highway with these people, but every time **I** had a flat, I was in BEHIND, and every time HE had HIS flats, he was in FRONT, so I was always [helping] repair flats for HIM, plus my own flats [while] behind! But they made it THAT far! They were camped out there right alongside the road. They couldn't GO any further, 'cause they had no more TIRES, and they were BROKE. He had gotten a job immediately in town. He was a skilled carpenter. But [chuckle, chuckle] They straightened it out afterwards, you know, after he got his first paycheck, I guess, but...

Well, anyway, we came into town, and we met — it was on a Friday that we got there. That's right, 'cause we had to spend that week end, then. I got to the Fish and Wildlife office, and they told me that I'll have to come back Monday, that they hadn't received any definite word on this job — I mean HERE at this location — from Juneau, on the Kenai Moose Range, you know. So I told Mae, I said, "Well," I says, "It looks like we're gonna have to find a place to park for the week end. So we decided to drive back to where these people were, you know? Where THEY were parked alongside the road. Yeah, we KNEW them, at least!! [laugh] Yeah, and THAT's right, and there was a spring there — a bubbling spring, where there was lots of water! So I told Mae, I said, "Well, we'll get you there, and we'll heat up water, we'll wash your head, and all this and that, and we'll get set up, you know?" Which we did.

So the following Monday, we went back to Anchorage, and who should meet us, but Elkins! My former Intelligence Officer from the Aleutians, you know? And, of course, he says, "The job is all set up, that you just have to get down there, and it's all ready to go. And Mr. Spencer will be up here

shortly just to meet with you, and visit with you, you know? Give you some idea of what the work is.”

So, he says, “In between time,” he said, “let us go over here to this —” (Gee! Now the word doesn’t come to mind!) — “Oysters!” Yes! Oysters! BOY! Did we have a meal of oysters with Elkins!

Well, I met with Mr. Spencer, and he gave me a run-down on what the work was, and how I was to get there. I found I had to go down to the railroad station, ship my truck a day in advance, and follow it with our carcasses the following day in the passenger train, and we’d meet up at Moose Pass — get together at Moose Pass. Which we did. We unloaded the truck from the freight train, and took off for Kenai. But the road in those days was nothing like the road now. It was all cobblestones! And it was UP and DOWN! Weaving through the timber, and it was ALL — there was no fine gravel, it was ALL BIG BOULDERS! And it took us a half day, from the time we left Moose Pass to get to Kenai Lake — to the [north] — to Quartz Creak on Kenai Lake, where we camped for the night.

The following day we drove — finally made it into Kenai. ‘Course you’re just driving twenty-five, thirty miles an hour, you know, and over this rough road. And, of course, you’re trying to protect your tires, too, but...

Carol: Good thing you had an International.

John: Yeah, yeah. That was for sure! Then we finally — when we DID arrive at the Kenai National Moose Range Headquarters, there was just the log building, which had been the first Agricultural Experimental Station building in Alaska. That’s where that business had started. And then the Fish and Wildlife Service, I guess, had taken over that land, but that building was still set there, and it was — I don’t know how — it must have been thirty, forty years old at the time, too. But then alongside of it was, of course, where the Refuge Manager lived. But here, again, that house — or that place was being remodified — rebuilt by a basement being put on it, so that was some of my first work. Pick and shovel, [laugh] pick and shovel. But THEN, to my surprise, I was assigned another job: to make a privy — ‘cause we had no private privy. So we had to build a privy, and . . .

We occupied the upstairs of this former Agricultural building, and there were no doors, the windows were solidly fly-specked. I tried washing it from the inside, but it was so dirty on the outside, and I had no ladder to get up there. And we had one car — or airplane seat, that — unless you had it

pressed against the wall, it'd topple over, and I got out our air mattresses, and I dug out two two-by-fours, and put 'em on the floor, and put the two mattresses on the floor along — within the two-by-fours, and that was going to be our bed. And then we had a small — what was it? — it was a drum — NO! It was a reel — yeah — a small reel, that we set our gas stove on. And that was our —[chuckle] that was our quarters for the summer! [laugh] I hung my rain parka over the doorway for my door! [laugh]

Well, anyway, we got established. 'Course the — how was it? — My first assignment — after I'd been pick-and-shoveling, yeah, — on that basement, well then — I started collecting plants — and mounting plants. So this had gone on for maybe a half a day, when Mae had gone — or the Refuge Manager had called her and asked her if she was able to pound a typewriter, and do that kind of work, and she said, "Sure!" So he says, "Well, would you come here to my office, and I've got some work that needs to be completed." But then they got to the office, and he looked in there, and he says, — this — there's a big tub in there, you know? He says, "This tub has to be moved first. Where are we gonna move it?" He had hauled it there from the bathroom, you know? They were remodeling the bathroom! So he was a man of — well, he was a man of few words, and he said, "Well, ah, — when we get this tub moved, then we'll start on the — with the typewriter," you know? Then he LEFT! He went FLYING! Yeah! He went FLYING! The next thing I hear was a tapping at the window, you know? And a hand *waving* for me to come, you know? [laugh] Mae's at the window, and [laugh] I come to see what's the problem, and she tells me what's the story, you know, and — but she says, "Before we can move that tub in that bathroom, we have to lay the **LINOLEUM!!!**" [laugh!! laugh!! laugh!!]

SO! We [chuckle] — I said, "Well, I'll tell you," I said, "You go outside. You go collect plants for me, and you — you put 'em in this binder — I mean — the drier, you know." (I forget what I used to call it.)

Carol: A press?

John: A PRESS! Yeah! A press. And — "I'll take care of a little of what I can do here."

So I proceeded into the bathroom, and I took a look, and — well, I FIRST looked to see what they had done with the other rooms. I saw they had first laid another — ONE layer of some kind of a black tar paper down, that they had glued down, and then they put this linoleum over that. So

here I had to cut out all this stuff, and GLUE, and REglue, and GLUE, you know? And I finally got it set up, and I went and I started draggin' that — well, by that time it was — yeah, close to quittin' time, I guess, that first day, and — well, I got the tub over there, just ready to go into the bathroom, but I didn't want to drag it over that floor, 'cause I was afraid — it hadn't dried enough, you know — or that the linoleum would slip — not stay in one spot.

Well, Spencer returned later that evening, after he had made his patrols, and — I heard him drive up. I went in the house, and he helped me move that bathtub into the bathroom where it was supposed to be! Then we set up the office for next day's work.

Carol: [laugh] Was he surprised?

John: Oh, yeah! Well, NAW! HE wasn't surprised! He knew what would go on! So then Mae began working for him as a — well, as a typist — office worker. And, of course, to get ME in there, they had to set up a new scale. They set up a scale of IGS-1. Nobody knows what it meant, or what it consisted of, but only it had a fee associated with it, and that was proportionate to the "I" grade — the number one grade, which was maybe a hundred-fifty or so dollars a month, you know.

So, well, anyway, I got all my equipment together that I figured I'd need to use out there setting up these plots. Actually, I had to do a lot of constructing. I had to make a — that's right — a meter-square frame, and I had to dig up a lot of steel posts, for camera points, and then steel posts to mark the ends of the plots, and I had a truckload of equipment when I started out. Of course I took my wife with me, and my tent.

We went out there, and we spent — that full week I was settin' up these plots, in this burn — '47 — it was the '47 burn, and here it was 1950, and it was just as BLACK as the ace of spades! I'd go in those trees, and — to find out [interruption]

One of these sites that I was setting up, along came a truck, and it had a flat tire. [interruption]

#TAPE THREE#

As I said, this truck came by, and it had a flat tire. It parked in front of our vehicle, and the people in it got out. I later learned that his name was **Harold** — Harold Waugh, one of the first guides working the Kenai Peninsula. In later years we had a wonderful gathering with him as a

celebration of the tire I helped to repair out on the [chuckle] moose range in 1950.

We continued these plot sites until we had the total, I believe of twelve established. My wife was with me every day, but then again, she wanted to be located near water every evening. So here, not knowing whether I'd be back to the same campsite or not, I'd pack up all our camping gear, bring it back to my vehicle, move on the the next site, hoping that we'd find another lake closer, and eventually have to drive back to the same site we had in the past, and pack the gear down and reestablish camp. But I noticed then that every morning, early in the morning, why, my wife would get up, and she'd be sitting on the — in the brush along the bank of this lake (I forget the name of the lake, but it's the first one on the [right] side as you go into upper campground on Skilak Lake today.)

Carol: "Is it Hidden Lake?"

John: "No, no. [Lake Ohmer] But she'd sit there, and the loons would be out on this lake, and they'd start talking, and she'd talk to them! And she'd bring those loons right up to the shore! I couldn't believe it! And every year after that, whenever we had loons, she'd go down to our lake and call them in. And we became very acclimated and attached to loons, and we followed through with all our sweatshirts — loon sweatshirts, and loon placards and loon — well, what do you call those glass..."

Carol: "Sun catchers I think."

John: "Sun catchers!"

Well, anyway, we completed all the plots, went back to Kenai, where we met again, of course, with Refuge Supervisor Spencer, and I think Mae did a little more work for him before. . .

It was drawing on to September, and we were supposed to be back in Fairbanks very shortly, but Mr. Spencer came up with the idea, he said, "John, how would you like to go up the Kenai River and cross Skilak Lake to its south side, and we'll go in and see if we can't get us a moose!" — which we DID — after a very, ah, PHYSICAL trip up the Kenai. We first tried to get up Funny River, knowing that there were very large moose at the head of Funny River. We had possibly made it up a few miles up, but every time we got going a little, the prop would sheer! And I'd heave myself out of the boat — we were towing a canoe behind us — grab the bow of the boat, and hang on tight and holding it until Dave got his prop — a new sheer pin put back in the

prop! And he'd get the motor started, and I'd swing myself over the side, and back into the boat! 'Course I was wet to the waist, and even higher! And the water was **COLD!** We tried that a number of times, until it looked like it was pretty near impossible to proceed forward with the boat that we were propelling with this OLD, two cylinder Johnson motor, which was running on one sparkplug!

We stopped to pull up on the bank to make a cruise ahead, and no sooner had we got some twenty feet or thirty feet from where we had landed the boat, there was a HUGE brown bear print, just — the water was just o-o-oozing back into the print! So we knew it was just fresh! So we figured we'd better [chuckle] get back to our boat, and [chuckle] go back down to Kenai and see if we can't get to the head waters of the Funny River by going up the rest of the Kenai River to Skilak Lake and then heading to the south end. This we did, after [chuckle] a rather picturesque trip back down the river: Me in the canoe, leading the procession, and Spencer coming behind with the boat!

We got back on the Kenai, and started back up. We got to the west end of Skilak Lake where the long rapids occur, and, of course, we had to work through these rapids. And there, alongside, on the — it'd be the northwest side of the then Kenai River where it left Skilak Lake, — was a huge army installation! They had [chuckle] set up a recreational camp that they were bringing their service personnel down from Anchorage — Elmendorf, and I believe Fort Richardson — for recreation purposes — fishing, etcetera. Well, I hadn't known about this whatsoever! But I believe Spencer had known that it was there. And also there had been a mining claim established shortly after the Moose Range had been established there. And of course, some of these individuals were even attempting to pan — I mean these recreational servicemen — were attempting to pan gold out of this mining claim.

Well, we stopped there, and it was practically dark. And I was **COLD!** I was just *shivering*! I was just shaking from the top of my head to the bottoms of my feet! We marched over to one of the buildings along the wood boardwalks! They had boardwalks! They had it really set up. [We] got in there, and fortunately we were able to get some hot coffee. I drank cup after cup of hot coffee trying to get rid of my **shivers**. But I continued shivering, and we still went back to our boat, 'cause we had to get to the south side of Skilak Lake. Well, we got three-quarters of the way across when we ran

aground! It was all shallow water for more than — I think it was more than a mile — it was at the low “tide” [water] or some such thing that — the water had gone down a little, because I recall we had problems getting up that last stretch of the Kenai River into Skilak Lake.

Well, as we were proceeding along, my wading, pulling the boat, [laugh] trudging toward shore, we could hear people ahead of us — I mean voices, in the distance. And Mr. Spencer had said that there’s this one cabin that we could use if it was unoccupied, but here, apparently, some people had gotten there ahead of us! Well, it turned out to be our salvation! Because no sooner had we got to the shore, they were there helpin’ us! They brought me into that building — BOTH of us into that building, warmed us up, and FED us, and to top it off, we had a big slice of — I remember — all frosted CHOCOLATE CAKE! Which they had BAKED right there on this tin STOVE! [laugh] So after warming up and getting fairly dry, we went out and found an area where we set up our tent and went to sleep.

Then the following morning Spencer and I, and — I forget the name of this guide who was there — we had talked about this the evening before, and this guide was going to show us this “Moose Horn Trail” — that’s right, “Moose Horn Trail” — which would bring us up to the head waters of the Funny River. So we proceeded out that morning, after having — again — having breakfast with this group — which all came from Cooper Landing! They were all the people from Cooper Landing! They had come down the river in their boats, and had set up. And there’s a few names that just escape my mind, but they were prominent people in Cooper Landing at that time. And I met them later, but for some reason those names just escape me at this time.

Well, this gentleman guide and Spencer and I started up this “Moose Horn Trail.” Oh, that’s right! This gentleman had shot a moose the day before, and he was intending to pack it out! So this was the reason he was going to show us the trail, and then he was going to go to his moose kill, and begin packing out his animal. So we got to this place where we had to branch off from where he was going, and he told us just to follow this, and it will bring us up to where we had planned to go. We had thought — or in our MINDS, I should say, — we had thought that if we’d get up there and can find the Funny River, we would pack in that canoe, and we would float the Funny River back down to Kenai River, hunting along the way!

But no sooner we got to where we were above the highlands where I expected Funny River to appear over the next big rise, there in front of us — it was getting about four o'clock in the afternoon — five o'clock, somewhere in there — and all of a sudden there were three huge moose all standing there! So [chuckle] I just had a little twenty-two automatic with me, [John was not yet an Alaska resident, so was not hunting.] but Spencer had his — I believe it was a forty. . . — No! He had had a new bear gun made which he called (what was it?) It was made from a Winchester .348, a lever action. I think he had it modified to a 45-90 — big bore bear gun — short barreled bear gun, which again was the legal limit on a barrel, but the barrel itself had been exchanged. And he fired off a shot! I heard a “Whack!” And then he fired off another shot! I didn't hear any “Whack.” So the moose disappeared. I made a circle then to where I thought this “Thump” had occurred. I couldn't find anything, couldn't find any sign of blood. But then all of a sudden Dave called, “Over here! Over here!” I went over there, and you should have SEEN that — **HUGE, tremendous bull moose!** And here — we're [chuckle] stuck up in the hills, which we found out later was approximately seven miles from Skilak Lake!

So we set up a camp there. We had to dress that moose out that night, of course. And I think it was about four o'clock in the morning when we finished this job! Had the meat hanging, and had a tarp over it to protect it from rain, in case rain occurred, and we started back to Skilak Lake, carrying the tongue, the liver, and all the best parts, the innards, the kidneys, etc. And we may have taken a chunk or two of the meat, too. I don't recall. But the reason for going a little lighter was that we had to locate an in-between station where we could stop off at night, because we didn't really know how many miles we had to travel back and forth, and also to refamiliarize ourselves with the back-trail. We came to one point where [chuckle] Mr. Spencer asked me, he says, “Now, John,” he says, “do you remember now which fork we take here?”

And I had made — on our walk in, the day before — for some reason I had made a special notice of that site, because usually when I'm in the woods, when I see a little — what I think may be a problem, I may have to backtrack, I look over my back trail, and I spotted a few items that I could recognize in case I had to come back to the same point. Well, there was some of the points that I recognized! I told him, “Yes! Up this grade,

instead of going down this way.” [chuckle] So we went up that, and we finally came back right to Skilak Lake.

And there, again, was all this group of people waiting happily for us, and feeding us, and [laugh!]. . . So we got ready, after we arrived there — I think it was still mid-morning after we got to Skilak Lake, as I recall, that first day, and we picked up an extra tarpaulin, and some other gear that we had, to make this in-between camp, ‘cause we knew packing meat we wouldn’t be able to make — we’d possibly be able to make ONE round trip a day, but then possibly also one and a half trips — which later proved to be! So we started this packing, and we PACKED! And we’d make one trip out the following day, and then we’d go back in, reload, and get back to that halfway point, and finish it the following morning, then go back in. I forget now how many days it took us to get that moose out, I think it was five. Five days — ‘course I might be expanding this a LITTLE too much, but it seemed to me it was five days — well — TOTALLY it was five days.

But we had to leave the hide and the horns. We didn’t have time. Because I knew that I HAD to get back to the University of Alaska, and every day that was [chuckle] going, passing by, well, the lesser chance I had of getting back there and entering that semester’s beginning of my Masters work! So we finished packing the moose down. We loaded it on the boat, and with this “one-lunger” chugging, — fortunately, the water had raised! Either Skilak Glacier or one of the glaciers had released its water, and the water level in the lake was higher, so we didn’t have to tow the boat out as far out as we had to pull it in a few nights previously. The one-lung Johnson motor brought us all the way down to the [Bing’s Landing] rapids above the present town of Sterling. I forget the name of the rapids. But that’s where we pulled out the boat, and we reloaded aboard a truck, and proceeded into Kenai. Of course when we got back to Kenai, IMMEDIATELY, I got busy and unloaded all the meat, hung it up, and...because I knew we had to get back all the way to Moose Pass to catch both the freight and the passenger train within a very short while, otherwise we’d NEVER get back to Fairbanks!

So at that time, Mr. Spencer even offered me the job of Assistant Refuge Manager, but I told him then that I was sorry, that it’s a wonderful opportunity, I realized, but I had made this commitment with the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit that I would enter their unit and work on some project that was assigned to me — that I had made this commitment, and I

felt obligated. So we, again, proceeded to pack up that evening, and we departed for Cooper Landing.

And I recall — was it on that trip? — No, it had been on a previous trip to Cooper Landing, while we were camped out settin' up these plots — yes — that the red salmon run had come in pretty strong. And this roadway matches none of the road system that exists today. It was all up and down along the cliff side on the north side of the Kenai River, where the Kenai had long fingers of water coming off it to the north. And on one of these fingers, my wife was looking out the window of the truck, she said, “What are those red fish?! What are those red fish?!” So I stopped the truck, and she goes over and she looks, and she sees these fish, and of course, they're — they HAD to be salmon. But this was the first time we saw salmon in their stages of — where they're ready to lay eggs — to drop their salmon eggs! And she COULDN'T believe it! She wanted to get out her fish rod and bring back this specimen back with us to show that [chuckle chuckle] that she has caught a special fish! [laugh] To have it identified! Well anyway, we didn't have TIME to catch that fish.

We proceeded to Cooper Landing, and fortunately, we ran right away into some of the people that we had met — or I had met down on Skilak Lake on our moose hunt! And there they were! And actually, they had been celebrating a gathering when we got there, and they waved us down. I stopped, and, of course, I knew by sight a few of them, and they invited us over to have lunch with them — I mean their evening supper, and then they told us about the train schedule. Because most of them worked as longshoremen at Seward, and they had a good idea what the train schedules were. Because they had to drive all the way through Moose Pass down to Seward whenever they had this work.

And they said, “Well, it's no use for you to go to Moose Pass tonight. There won't be a train there until tomorrow afternoon! The freight train.” So they said, “Why don't you stay with us over night?” Which we did. And they offered us THEIR OWN BUNK to sleep in — this shows the hospitality of those days. And where THEY slept, I don't know. It was a very small cabin. Maybe they pitched a small tent outside and crawled into it! I don't know! But anyway, early the next morning they had us up, and they fed us, I recall, pancakes and sausage, and I think there was an egg or two, and they told us, they said, “Now if the passenger train schedule isn't on that day, then you

come back for the following night.” Which, again, we had to do! Because when we — NO! No! I forget! They came! They accompanied us! That’s right! Because they had to drive us back, because we had to load that truck on that freight train!

So the freight went with our vehicle, but again, I forgot to say, all the while we were there at Kenai, during that summer, my wife would fish every evening! And she’d catch silver salmon — this was during the latter part of August — silver salmon upon silver salmon! And I, of course, had gotten one of my paychecks, and so I was going to the local store and buying quart jars with lids, and every night I’d be [laugh] I’d be cutting up fish, putting them in salt brine, filling the bottles, and we had a pressure cooker — NO! We borrowed a pressure cooker from Mr. Spencer, that’s right! And we pressure cooked these fish, sometimes three, four o’clock in the morning, I’d be there finishing up a load of fish! We finally ended up with seven CASES of quart jars of salmon that we took back to Fairbanks with us! [laugh] So you can see how...”

Carol: “Man! You really liked SALMON!”

John: “Oh! I’ll tell you! And it was delicious! And I got to like it better that winter, because we had nothing ELSE, practically, to eat, you know. But anyway, that was part of the story! Here all this stuff was loaded on that truck, and had to go ahead of us.

‘Course I’m still trying to think of the name of these people, but it won’t come to mind. But they brought us back to their cabin, fed us, slept us, and DROVE US AGAIN the NEXT day, back to Moose Pass! Over all this rocky, bumpy road! And I guess on this trip they were going to go back down to Seward, too, to find out if there was any immediate work as far as long shoring going on. So they dropped us off there, and we waited, and we talked to a few of the individuals in that yard, and they told us to go over to the depot and get a ticket, that they were SURE that that train would be along, and just to wait at the depot. And sure enough, I forget what time of the day it was, it was very late, I know, because — in the afternoon, at least, — because when it finally pulled in, we just heaved a sigh of satisfaction! But then, to our surprise, — well, of course, we had come down on that same track, but I forgot to mention that there was this huge curve, a climbing curve, where the trains went over themselves in a figure “8”. Up and around! And this was a tremendous sight to see! And here — me with my little

brownie camera, which I forgot, AGAIN, to mention, after taking all these pictures that I was thinking were prime pictures, with this little box brownie camera that I had, here I was trying to shoot out of this train window at this huge curved structure where the train was going over itself, and when I finally DID get those negatives, those roles, [chuckle] printed later that fall, [chuckle] every one had a light streak! The camera was leaking light, and every picture was ruined! All the pictures I had taken! [chuckle] Fortunately, all the pictures I took with Spencer's camera when I was setting up these plots turned out exceptional! [chuckle] But anything I took with that brownie was worthless!

Well anyway, we got to Anchorage. And, of course, on this final trip to Moose Pass we had hit a few bad stones with the truck tires, and there were big bulges, and I knew I had to do something with those wheels before I could get out of Anchorage to proceed up the highway back towards Fairbanks. So I spent — we arrived, I think, Yeah. It was in the evening. We got a hotel, or — it had to be a hotel; there were no motels in those days — a room where we spent the night — and then we spent half of the following day repairing two truck tires. I got reliners that I purchased from a nearby gas station that fortunately were the size that I could slip into my tires, and we got back on the road, and we proceeded up to — immediately!

Of course, we got — [laugh] here again, I recall, we got back to where these people had been camped in that large trailer — that sagging trailer. It must have been at least twenty foot long, if not more. It could have been close to thirty foot. But what made this sag was that they had a huge cast iron military type cook stove set right in the center. [laugh] Wonderful baker, wonderful heater, but of tremendous weight! [chuckle] Well, we located them. They had moved from the side of the road to another campsite underneath the [railway bridge] — I forget the name of the river, but there was supposedly a campsite, but we saw their rig parked down there, so we followed the road back around, and went down there to see if they were home, which they had been. They invited us to spend the night with them, and they shipped us off the following morning. 'Course after I told [laugh] (I can't remember their NAMES! Well, whatever their names were...) He was a carpenter, and he had earned WONderful wages all this time, but when he heard some of the stories I had to say, he said [laugh] he would have forgone all the money he had earned [chuckle] just for that one trip! [laugh]

So we departed, then, the following morning after a good send-off with a full breakfast and everything, and we proceeded on up the highway. We managed to get to — where was it now? — We passed Delta Junction. Yes! We were in a long straight stretch outside of Delta Junction when I heard this “POP!” and my one back tire blew out! One that I had repaired! Of course it was all over this rock! You had to drive twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five miles an hour, and just bumping along. So I stopped, and I knew I had this other spare, which I put on, but then, again, I couldn’t repair the other one in case I needed it further along. But we were SO late already, we were determined to continue ahead. But just before we departed, out of the woods comes this cow moose. It couldn’t have been fifty yards behind our vehicle where we were parked — had been parked changing the tire. And then we heard some talking going behind it — grunting! And it’s followed out by a HU-UGE bull moose! Oh, it was a BEAUTIFUL animal!! And the moose just looked at us, turned its head, walked across the road and proceeded in the direction that the cow moose had gone! So we got into the truck, and we headed for Fairbanks. I forget now. Did we... I think I drove all night — Yeah! I drove all night as I recall, and got back to where our trailer was parked in this private area — private residence — and we unloaded and got in there and went to sleep.

Now, of course, the next morning, which wasn’t very many hours away, I was up — scootin’ up to . . . well, Mae accompanied me, too, because she had the job — or supposedly had a job. We went up to the University, and found out where the Cooperative Wildlife Research unit was, and we appeared in the door, and [chuckle] Dr. Hosley was sittin’ behind his desk, and he looked up, after I’d knocked on the door and he’d told me, or signaled to open, you know, and he saw who we were, and he [laugh] he was [chuckle] what appeared to be then was the happiest man in the WORLD!! [laugh] IMMEDIATELY he put Mae behind the desk, and he said, “Now you get to work!” [laugh] But THEN, he says, “We got a problem with YOU, John! You’re over two weeks late! We don’t know whether we’re gonna be able to enter you into this semester’s work!” [laugh] “What excuse do you HAVE?” [laugh] “What excuse do you have?” [laugh]

I told him about this moose hunt, and the number of days it took us to pack out that moose, where we had THOUGHT that it would just be a trip up the river and back down, and I’d be leaving. Instead, here I was pretty near

seven days late at the end of the hunt! And then I still had to drive all the way back to Moose Pass to ship my truck ahead of me, wait for the following day to catch the passenger train, with no place to camp or stay. Fortunately, I told them, then, about these people who had helped us out, and that we were finally here. So he took this story with him, and went to whatever offices he had to go, and they discussed it, and I didn't hear about it until the following day that they finally made a decision that, yes, under those circumstances — the big delay in transportation by train, having to ship that vehicle one day ahead, and having to follow it up the following day, and the condition of the roads, they accepted it, and took me in as though I had begun on the first day of [that semester].

Well, anyway, I finished my two years there studying the beaver. That was it. They assigned me this beaver project, and I used those same traps that Dr. Hosley, again, had gone all the way to Tomahawk, Wisconsin, to pick up and haul north with him, so the beaver assignment was given to me. Although, as I recall now, I had requested working with the wolf. But the wolf was in a lower category at that time, and beaver was the high-priced fur coming out of Alaska, so they wanted — I mean as far as the Fish and Wildlife service was concerned, they wanted as much information on the beaver. And along with this, a fellowship was offered to me by the Fish and Wildlife service. I didn't know how much that fellowship was, but it turned out to be three hundred dollars — a hundred and fifty per year. So that was something to add to my seventy-five dollars per month that I was getting under the G.I. bill for going back to school, which was later, fortunately, before I left, it was raised to ninety-five dollars. [laugh] So we were getting RICH! [laugh] But along with my wife's salary, which, again, I don't know what it was, I don't have any idea what it was, but I remember that Fall — it was just before Thanksgiving, when she and I — well, it was middle of November — yeah — because the cold spell started Thanksgiving, that's right — we had gone into town to do a little shopping, to get a [few groceries] — there was an

"A and P" store at that time, and we saw this one little eat-out place, so we said, "Well, we're going to celebrate! We haven't had a bottle of pop since we crossed the border! [chuckle] Back in — what was it — July fourth? Yeah! July fourth!" So we went in there, and I, feeling PLUSH, for some reason, ordered, also, two hamburgers! [laugh] So we sat there, and we ate our

hamburger, and we had a bottle of — I forget what kind of pop it was. I think it — it MAY have been a coke, I don't recall for sure. But that was our first bottle of pop since arriving in Alaska. And of course we had had no money for buying even a beer, or anything, so we were totally teetotalers the whole time we were attending the University of Alaska.

But then during those days at the University we also had big game feeds, and of course all the wildlife students who were working on their Masters' were working with some individual bird or animal. We'd gather up our carcasses — of course butcher them out properly, and put them in deep freezes, etc., and I forget what time of the year it was now, was it in January or February, we had this big wildlife feed. And I'd donate a beaver carcass, and I remember Sal DeLeonardis brought in — grouse — NO! — ptarmigan! Ptarmigan! That was his subject. But then I can't remember what the others were, because some were working on martin, and some — we may have even TRIED martin meat, I think so! I know there was an otter there. And, of course there was sheep, and goat, [moose, and caribou,] and I think there was even some musk ox! And also, as I recall, there was wolf! And you know, the wolf took number one on both occasions! It was the best tasting, the best — I mean it was mostly, as I recall, white meat, and it was very juicy! 'Course it could have been the COOK, who had cooked it, that had accomplished this, but the wolf took — in the voting as to which was in preference, the wolf topped the list.

Well, after receiving my degree, at the commencement exercises the main speaker was the future Chief Justice [of the Supreme Court], Warren Berger. After completing the schedule at the school, turning in all my equipment, all my traps, and specimens, etc., Mae and I had, of course, planned ahead a little. We knew there were no job offerings immediately in the Fish and Wildlife service, so I had cast my — whatever you cast — elsewhere, and before I knew it, an offer was made to me to move to Kotzebue, Alaska, to be in charge of the reindeer herds under the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Reindeer service. Of course I became interested. My first question was whether my transportation [was] going to be provided, and would my wife be able to accompany me, and would HER transportation be included? The next thing I knew was that they said that MY transportation would be furnished for the flight, but she would have to furnish her own. So I put up a ruckus. I told them no. I said that unless my wife accompanied

me, I'd refuse their offer on this job. That I'd go elsewhere to look. So they immediately came back at me, they said, "Yes! We have a job for your wife! [chuckle] at the hospital! as a — what did they called it now — the lowest one on the scale — the dishpan — no! — the BEDpan . . . what? [laugh]"

Carol: "Changer"

John: "But unbeknownst to me, they had [previously] contacted Dr. Rabeau at the public health service hospital at Kotzebue, and, of course, he, wanting to have a stenographer that could take dictation, was all for it! So this is how they programmed it in, unbeknownst to HIM, TOO, because when we did finally arrive at Kotzebue, Mae appeared before him one day after we had gotten half settled in our future home, which was just a former reindeer cabin that had been floated over from some other point in Alaska, and the seal oil line was all around the walls of it on the inside, where when the high water came, well the seal oil — which was stored [in sealskin pokes] in those cabins — just floated up on the surface, and it took me a week of painting to get this covered. But anyway, she had gone to the hospital one morning, of course not knowing what the lines were, just joined the line that was going into this dispensary, and she finally got to the door, and the doctor looked at her, and says, "Well, what are YOU doing here? What do you want?"

She says that, "Well, I'm supposed to be your secretary!" [laugh]

He threw up his hands, and he said, "Secretary!" he said, "Nobody told me there was a secretary comin' down for me! I don't have an office space for you or anything, but come along with me! We'll get one set up **immediately!!**" [laugh] Which they did!

And it turned out that part of her program was that she had to 'tend to the bread on baking day, 'cause her office was next to the cooking facilities, and the cook who did the baking would always take off a few hours in the afternoon after she got all her breads in the oven, and it'd be Mae's job, then, to check the bread, and to see when they were done, and to stack 'em, and cool 'em, and [laugh] along with her job of taking dictation, and setting up all the file system and all of that, which she was doing day and practically night! But we finally got a hand-hold on it.

My job, of course, involved working with Natives setting up new [winter grazing] areas — or locating areas and setting up new areas for reindeer herds, and also working with the then government herd, which was located southeast of Kotzebue, and also they had a [gonvernment] reindeer herd on

Nunivak Island, which I was supposed to oversee. So between Kotzebue and Nunivak was a long distance, and I had to work out a schedule where — to be at each of these places at the proper time — to rotate — and then also to attend all the deer handlings that were in progress during the fall of the year with the various herds that had been previously established, such as at Noatak and Selawik. I also had to search out new wintering areas for deer — reindeer — so that in the future we could establish new herds. This involved considerable flying in the summer marking out, from the air, what appeared to be good lichen areas, which is the main feed of reindeer during winter — both reindeer and caribou — and then getting on the ground both winter and summer and examining it firsthand and plotting or marking — actually plotting out what vegetation there was in various categories. Also the height of growth of the lichen. Some areas were really astonishing! They'd be a foot high in lichen! And others, of course, depending on the terrain, were fairly short.

But I had programmed a number of herds to be going into these areas. The deer then would be taken from the government herd after a suitable Native had been trained a year or so with the government herd, and qualified to obtain these deer. The total loan from the government — the federal government, which owned the deer — were approximately nine hundred animals of various ages. Of course a complete tabulation of these animals were kept, and the herder who obtained these animals, then, in five years, was supposed to return the same amount of animals in the same various age classes and sexes as had been loaned to him previously.

In this period when I was there I set up three new reindeer herds. One was between the Kobuk River, Southeastward towards Selowik. the second, we moved deer from the government herd south all the way to the hills north of Nome and west of Nome. The third herd we moved to the south end of Kotzebue Bay to supplement Charlie Clark's deer.

We were successful in moving the deer to Charlie Clark's, and also, after a two year's trek, got the deer to this grazing area north-northwest of Nome. The herd that we tried to establish between Kobuk and Selowik didn't — wasn't received too hospitably by the Natives living in that village close to the Kobuk [Noorvik.] They claimed that the land was all under their reservation, that the deer had to be moved to the eastward or northeastward to keep them off their reservation lands. In so doing the herder — his last

name I believe was Downy — moved his deer, and that winter the caribou migration came through and walked off with all his animals! Some of these deer that had followed the caribou were seen by me later up as far as the Stease Highway. Actually, a lot of these animals were shot by hunters along the Stease as caribou. They still had their metal ear tags and also the clip marks showing which herd they had originated from. So you can see how far the animals had actually moved in a very few years.

Well, we finally decided to leave the service — the reindeer service — and I obtained a job, and my wife also, as bookkeeper and secretary for a barge company that was opening up on the Nenana River and the Yukon supplying freight to the Yukon. So we moved to Nenana, where we worked for two years with this barge line. Then one of the members of this group that had formed this new barge line operated B and R Tug and Barge out of Kotzebue.

After two years at Nenana they sent us back to Kotzebue to take over the barge line at Kotzebue, and also supplying all the oil and the various freight to all the villages bordering the water approach areas such as Selowik, Noorvik, Kiana, and south where Charlie Clark's herd is. We spent a year there, and the following summer, my wife joined two nurses who were making a — who had planned a tour of Europe. So she departed in — I believe it was mid-summer, and I was supposed to pick her up in Minneapolis on her return. Which I did. I flew out to Minneapolis and picked her up. I also picked up a new vehicle. As we were coming back up the highway we learned that the B and R Tug and Barge house, that I had left in charge of an assistant manager, had burned, and he died with the building. I also had had a dog — a Chesapeake — who I had trained to open the door, and the dog was found in front of this door, but was unable to open it, because it had been locked. We decided not to return to Kotzebue whatsoever.

So we, in exchange, decided to move down to the Kenai Peninsula, hopefully finding an area where we could homestead and start our lives anew. We got down here, and I visited Mr. Spencer the first evening that we arrived, and we found out then that his wife was in Anchorage expecting a baby. So we found accommodations down on a Kenai River cabin. Again, I can't recall the — located approximately where the present Riverside restaurant is today. I used to drive to Kenai from here, and tend to my work.— No. I'm jumping the gun! One morning, seven o'clock, a knock came

at my door. That's the way it was. Mr. Spencer was there. He said, "John," he says, "would you like to come work for us?" He says, "I've got an opening that needs to be filled immediately, and if you're so inclined, you meet me at Kenai, and we'll fly into Anchorage, and we'll meet the Regional Director, where we can discuss this job." Which I did. I came back then as assistant refuge manager in charge of all the oil activities that were going to occur on the then Kenai National Moose Range. Johnson was refuge manager in charge at that time, as Spencer had been made Refuge Supervisor. So my extensive work with the oil activities began from then on.

This was in early '58, and I worked, of course, with various "seismic" — "seismic" was the big thing in those days — seismic companies, running their surveys, exploratory surveys, on the northern half of the moose range. This went on into late fall, when refuge manager Johnson received — or, had applied for and received — a transfer back to Texas, to where the — I forget the name of the bird, but — Oransis Wildlife Refuge in Texas. So accordingly I was made acting Refuge Manager until they could make a final selection. I worked in the job as acting Refuge Manager and also supervising all the oil activities, conducting all the surveys, air and foot. I worked from three o'clock in the morning in summer time till nine o'clock at night, when I used to land the plane. Actually, the airplane was my office. Any time a question came up at our Refuge Headquarters, I just had a part-time typist, and one maintenance man under me, and we did all this work that is now being taken care of by twenty-plus men in very favorable quarters, whereas we were just under a little metal quonset hut.

After approximately five years on the job I began to see that there was very little progress from my standpoint in remaining here. Also, my father was seriously ill stateside, and accordingly I put in for — I applied for a transfer to Seamy National Wildlife Refuge in upper Michigan, where I'd be closer to home. Before this occurred, a group of Bureau of Land Management officials, flying in a Bureau of Land Management plane, had come into Kenai, and came to the office, and they asked, "Where's this Refuge Manager Hakala? We want to speak to him."

I says, "I'm Refuge Manager Hakala. What do you want?"

They introduced themselves. They were all from Washington staff of the Bureau of Land Management. Of course, they were accompanied by some of the "local yokels" from Anchorage, also. They laid it on the line to me,

askin' me why the oil companies couldn't do their activities as they pleased. I told them in no — in words that really set the stage, I said that they had signed these stipulations, and this is what they are being bound to, and they will do their work according to whatever contracts they signed, and which I would enforce. They tried to get me to turn my thinking around to help the oil interests in this area, which I said, "Absolutely no." They stand by those stipulations which they had signed in Washington D.C., and my only authority was to enforce them. That I had no other way to go but those contracts which had been signed. Accordingly, it was shortly thereafter that I applied for this transfer. But before the transfer occurred, another airplane landed at the Kenai Airport. It was another goose coming in, had a big troop of men unloaded. The head of the troop was Stuart Udal, the Secretary of the Interior. All he said — of course I was there with the service car, dressed in uniform, we were all in uniform, we had heard this group was arriving — all he said was, "Where is Refuge Manager Hakala?"

I said, "I am Refuge Manager."

He says, "Do you have a car?"

And I said, "Yes."

He said, "Let's go to the car." And we did. We took off. I drove him over the whole road system on the Moose Range, and the adjoining roads, public roads, that cross through the Moose Range, pointed out all the problems that we had had in the past, and what problems were evolving, and at what stage they were. We must have been gone three and a half hours or more — maybe four hours, I can't remember. Maybe it was even longer, but when we got back to the Refuge Headquarters, Mr. Udal had me just drive to the plane. I got out of the car, as he did. He tapped me on the shoulder, and he got back in the plane, and the parties all left. I went back to the office, asked Mr. Spencer what had evolved while I was gone. He said, "Nothing," that they had just waited, and waited and waited. And of course, the way this had occurred, I felt that Mr. Spencer should have accompanied us, because he knew a lot of what was occurring, but apparently the only word the Secretary of the Interior Udal had was "John Hakala!" [grim chuckle]

After waiting a few months for some reaction from Washington or my regional office, I finally figured that the quickest way I could get away from the Moose Range would be the best. So when finally the selection was made

for a new Refuge Manager at Seamy National Wildlife Refuge, and I found my name at the top of the list, I accepted. Within a week — no, it was more than a week, because I had to close up the house. — It was within a couple of weeks or three weeks, we were on the road back stateside.

I stayed on the Senny National Wildlife Refuge from '63 to '67, when I noticed an article that they were seeking a Fish and Wildlife employee to oversee the Atomic Energy's Commission [Project] on Amchitka Island in the Aleutian. I immediately thought that this would be a good opportunity to return to Alaska. Accordingly, I put in my application, which was accepted immediately. Within a month we were en route back to Alaska, and I was assigned an office in the Federal building in Anchorage, and, of course, we had to find accommodations for our selves, which we did. My job in the Aleutian consisted primarily of supervising all the construction activities: the road-[construction], and the — anything associated with the drilling, and setting up for these blasts, which of course involved either atomic bombs, or [hydrogen bombs] Apparently my supervision of their activities went against the grain of the Atomic Energy Commission, and they got to the President, who followed through, and, through the Department of the Interior, had me reshuffled from Amchitka back to the Kenai National Moose Range. They made the position open for me [as Refuge Manager in charge of]the enai National] Moose Range. And also included in the deal was that I could reoccupy and repurchase the home that I had sold when we had left.

#END TAPE THREE#

#TAPE FOUR#

In mid-summer of '69, after I got back to the Kenai Moose Range, a fire occurred on the Swanson River known as the "Swanson River burn." Fishermen camping out along the Swanson River had a fire get away from them, and of course the Bureau of Land Management was called in to extinguish this flame. They got it under control, middle of the night. By morning, after the fellows had gone to sleep, the fire had burst forth a second time, and got away from them, with a rise in the wind — wind speed. The fire burned — I forget how many thousands of acres, but I recall it burning in August, coming down south all the way into Kenai — the north end of Kenai — and it actually crossed the road by — just above Beaver

Creek, and went south of the road that crosses between Soldotna and Kenai before it was put under control. The north end of the fire, of course, went all the way to [its northern limit — approximately 90,000 acres in all.]

So as a result of this drastic burn, the next thing I knew, the Secretary of the Interior, then former governor of Alaska, Hickel, made an unannounced trip to the Kenai Moose Range to see the extent and damage of what this fire had done. I recall him arriving at the Kenai airport. I accompanied him out in the field with a helicopter, and we set down. We made a brief survey of the various camps — the firefighters' camps, then we came back to the Kenai airstrip, and he departed. The next thing I knew — or heard — was that a grant of money to rehabilitate this burn area was being authorized to the Kenai National Moose Range. When the money came through, it amounted to about nine hundred thousand dollars. So the first thing that came to our minds, as far as rehabing the area was to crush all these burned black spruce trees. So we became involved with Latearno in Illinois, and we contracted for three machines. They're known as tree crushers. Huge lead wheels with cutting blades, then the following wheels just for mobility. But the machines were powered by electricity. Individual [motors] operated each wheel. But the main power unit was a large electric generator. Of course this equipment was completely unfamiliar to us, so in turn, we had to select our crews, and ship 'em out to the Latearno plant and have them instructed in the operation of these machines in total, as a screwdriver could be a very negative effect if used wrongly.

We crushed the total '69 burn area — 'course the fire had burned over a lot of the oil area, but it was confined primarily to the black spruce trees. None of the facilities were damaged. We also used these vehicles on some experimental plots using [various] habitat [types], depending on what type of vegetation was growing on it. We evaluated these sites prior to crushing, and also after crushing, and then over the long term, permanent plots were set up in these sites which could be followed through year after year to see which method would be most productive in producing future moose browse.

One of the side-effects of this fire was to produce a tremendous volume of morel mushrooms. People were loading up gunny sacks of mushrooms along the Swanson River road, and they were delicious! Of course after returning to the Moose Range a lot of problems began to appear in form of the various activities by the oil companies. When I made my first

inspection I recall them using one of the mud basins for dumping their sludge and their old used oil, which was completely against regulations. So immediately, when, I started puttin' down my foot — telling them what was supposed to be done according to the regulations they had signed, they immediately began contacting various other officials, politicians, etc.

One of the results was to rehabilitate some of the former drill sites that had been occupied by the oil companies, and to do this, of course, the oil companies themselves were primarily responsible to rehabilitate them. On one occasion I went out to check, having contacted this particular company. The individual involved set a date and time when he would be at this site to repair it. And of course a site involving a drill rig occupies quite a space of ground. Well, I found this individual there with a shovel in his hand, standing by the location of the former pipe which they had drilled, which had, of course, been capped, and he says, "Well, what do I have to do?"

To my surprise, he had intended to repair that site on his own. I asked him where his crew was, where his tractors were, where his back hoes were, where all the trucks were to haul in topsoil, etc., and his seeding program: Where was it?

He said that according to what he had signed his rehabilitation was just to make sure the site was clean — that if there's any — evidence of the former rig being in there, he would clean that up.

So I, in turn, notified him in no uncertain terms what the situation was at that time. I told him, "You're still carrying a ten thousand dollar bond, and I'm calling that bond in. I'm puttin' our own equipment in there to repair this site." Which we did.

A few years later this individual becomes — under our Governor Hickel, prior to him going to Washington as the Secretary of the Interior, becomes head of the Natural Resources Division. And of course in this position he must have had a little more "UMPH!" So when the Governor received this appointment in Washington, the next thing I knew this individual in the Juneau office had contacted his former boss, and they in turn contacted former oil company officials, who, in turn, got ahold of our former President Nixon, who sent down word to the Interior Department to get rid of that Hakala off the Kenai National Moose Range.

Later that fall, I received a memo from my then acting Regional Director in Anchorage. I was notified that there would be a reduction in force

— that they were holding a gathering — a meeting in Anchorage at the Fish and Wildlife office in Anchorage, and I was to attend — which I did. There I found — to my dissatisfaction — that the program had been practically authorized to — get rid of me as Manager on the Moose Range, since when I put up opposition the individual that was then occupying that seat stated emphatically for all to know that if John Hakala did not accept his retirement — early retirement — at whatever rate they prescribed, they were going to abolish the position of Refuge Manager on the Kenai Moose Range, and thereby eliminate my job completely, and I would not receive any retirement until I reached the age of sixty-five years old. So accordingly, after going back home, discussing it with my wife, and knowing what my retirement would be — two hundred and seventeen dollars a month — I said, “Fine!” I’ll accept it, and leave. Which we did.